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THE NAVAL MUTINIES OF 1797

BY

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Late Assistant Lecturer in History
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So Albion, round her rocky coast,
While loud the rage of battle roars,
Derides Invasion's haughty boast;
Safe in her wave-encircled shores,
Still safer in her dauntless band,
Lords of her seas, or guardians of her land,
Whose patriot zeal, whose bold emprise,
Rise as the storms of danger rise.

From Pye's *Ode for the New Year*,
1797.

PREFACE.

THE first four books of this volume give an account of the Mutinies at Spithead and the Nore;[1] the fifth and sixth books deal with the causes of the unrest. The information is largely drawn from original letters of the officers and seamen concerned in the risings and from other contemporary documents. These letters provide most of the material needed for a consecutive account of the Mutinies, but published works have been used in matters of detail to help the sequence of the story. Cunningham's book on the Nore Mutiny, which can almost be classed as contemporary, has been particularly useful as a supplement to Buckner's rather jejune dispatches. A list of authorities, with a short appreciation of their value, is given below, in Appendix C; and throughout the book reference is made, in footnotes, to the sources of information. The footnotes also contain some discussions on points of fact or opinion or chronology, and some illustrative matter; but I have tried to include in the text everything that is essential to the main argument, so that any readers who may wish to follow the general course of the Mutinies, but do not desire a critical study of details, will be able to neglect the notes without losing anything that is important for their purpose. In this volume I have not dealt with the scattered Mutinies which preceded the risings of 1797, nor with the mutiny at Plymouth, or the later troubles in the Mediterranean fleet, in the West Indies and at the Cape of Good Hope. The earlier risings were only slight outbreaks of discontent; the later were only echoes of the disturbances in the Channel and North Sea fleets.

1. These four books were first written at Cambridge as a dissertation for the certificate of research.

Almost the whole political and social importance of the Mutinies of 1797 lies in the great revolts at Spithead and the Nore. The other mutinies, however, are interesting in themselves; and in the Public Record Office there is abundant information on them, which I hope to use as the basis of some future work.

In the fifth book the grievances of the seamen are considered. It is shown that the conditions of service in the navy were in serious need of reform, and that many complaints of the seamen were fully justified. Several important changes in naval administration resulted from the Spithead Mutiny. But a full treatment of naval life before and after the Mutinies would be impossible without a long and thorough study of Admiralty records and memoirs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For this reason I have had to be content to describe the grievances and enumerate the reforms without attempting to give a full estimate of their importance in naval history.

The chief interest of the Mutinies, for those who, like myself, have no special knowledge of naval affairs, is in their bearing on social and political history—the subject of the sixth book. At the outset I had an impression that the disaffection was brought about by objective social causes,—particularly by bad food and low wages. But further investigation has convinced me that it was closely connected with the revolutionary movement and the wave of humanitarian feeling which overspread the country at the end of the eighteenth century. There is no indication, indeed, that the French Government was in any way concerned in the Mutinies, or that any group of revolutionary persons in this country or in Ireland had deliberately organized a naval revolt. But it appears that the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, and the conception of the rights of man, had permeated the navy, and that nearly all the seamen in the Channel and North Sea fleets were in some degree affected by them. I do not believe that a general and highly organized mutiny

would ever have taken place if the seamen had not been stirred by the vague but heartening ideals of the Revolution. In fact, as far as material grievances were concerned, there would have been more reason for a mutiny at almost any time in the previous two hundred and fifty years. It was the presence of a subjective stimulus that caused the seamen of 1797 to take action against the grievances which their predecessors had endured, or had evaded by desertion.

Because of the importance of this subjective impulse I have tried to follow and describe, at each new turn of events, what was passing in the minds of those who were concerned in promoting or suppressing the revolt. But the best indication of the seamen's motives and the clearest reflection of their state of mind is to be found in their own writings. I would therefore draw particular attention to the most important of their letters and poems quoted in this volume: Henry Long's message to the Admiralty (Chap. X); the Petition from the Nore Mutineers to the King (Chap. XVI); their address to the Nation (Chap. XXII); John Fleming's letter (Appendix A); and, above all, the topical songs in use at the Nore (Appendix A). These papers together will give a strong and vivid impression of the different opinions in the fleet: the simple or enlightened loyalty of the majority; the truculent self-confidence of some of the ringleaders; the sullen or acute hostility of others. The song, "All hail! brother Seamen," deserves to be read, not only for its literary interest, but because it exhibits very clearly the state of mind of the typical mutineer.

Not only were the Mutinies indirectly a result of the revolutionary movement; they also provide in themselves a striking illustration of the causes and characteristics of revolutions in general. In Mr. Hannay's words, they "supply, within manageable limits, and in singular perfection of development, the history of the rise, the explosion, the degradation and the end of a sedition."

Revolutions are commonly due to a striving towards liberty of some class of people who feel themselves oppressed. Aristotle attributed all revolutions to inequality, and there can be no doubt that social or political inequality implies a possibility of civil strife. But it is not enough that some people should be fortunate and others miserable, some privileged and others oppressed. Revolutions are not produced inevitably by disparity of fortune, as electric discharges are produced by a difference of potential. The oppressed must realize their grievances; they must believe that an effort on their part will improve their condition; and leaders must be found who will inspire and direct their action.

All these circumstances were present in the Mutinies. The inequality is obvious; for not only was there an immense gulf between the common seamen and the officers, the private soldiers also were much more comfortable than the sailors; and although at that time the navy was the chief security of the country against a French invasion, the seamen were immeasurably less free than the citizens they protected. There were men both in the fleet and on shore who pointed out to the seamen the injustice of their treatment, and deliberately encouraged them to revolt. The doctrine of the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of man had taken root in the navy, and had borne fruit; for the seamen had learnt a principle and an ideal which changed their vague discontent into definite action.

It is a remarkable feature of revolutionary movements that they seldom occur until the condition of the oppressed classes has begun to improve. A foretaste of liberty stirs up the desire for a greater measure of independence. This characteristic is found in the Mutinies; for at least in respect of discipline and food, the seamen of 1797 were more fortunate than earlier generations had been.

Further, it is noticeable that in a revolt of any kind the

insurgents tend to behave in an orderly manner so long as they are contending for a definite principle; but that a long continuance of the revolt, particularly when there is strong opposition, gives rise to disorder and violence. So in the Spithead Mutinies, because the leaders always kept before them the one object of moderate reform, the conduct of the seamen was quiet and sober. The only notable exception—the struggle on the *London*—was due to opposition, justifiable opposition it is true, on the part of the officers. The Nore Mutiny, on the other hand, although it began in a comparatively peaceful manner, in its later stages showed very evil developments. The earlier motives almost disappeared; they were supplanted by a blind hostility to the government; and discipline was at an end. But extreme violence in a revolt is fatal to success. It arouses opposition in the minds of all moderate men, even of those who approve the original objects of the rising, and it leads inevitably to a reaction. In this way a party of opposition was formed in the Nore fleet, and the conflict between the two factions contributed largely to the overthrow of the mutiny. The fall of the delegates of the Nore fleet in 1797 strongly resembles in principle the fall of the Jacobin government in France three years before.

These few illustrations may be enough to show that the Mutinies, apart from their importance in naval history, deserve to be studied in their relation to the history of revolutions.

In the preparation of this volume I have received help from several friends and advisers. I have particularly to thank Dr. J. Holland Rose, and Mr. H. W. V. Temperley, of Peterhouse, for many criticisms and suggestions. Mr. J. H. Clapham, of King's, Dr. J. S. Corbett, and Sir J. K. Laughton have given me guidance in different parts of the work; and I share the great and increasing debt of historical students to Mr. H. Hall and other officials of the Public Record Office. I owe the

choice of this subject for research to Professor A. J. Grant, of Leeds. The suggestion of a suitable line of research is in itself a considerable benefit, but it is only a small part of my total indebtedness to Professor Grant's teaching. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Mr. H. M. McKechnie, the Secretary to the Publications Committee, for many efficient services in the passage of this work through the press.

CONRAD GILL.

The University,
Manchester,
31*st July*, 1913.

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A.S.I. Admiralty Secretary In-Letters.
A.S.O. Admiralty Secretary Out-Letters.
A.S.Misc. Admiralty Secretary Miscellanea.
A.S.M. Admiralty Secretary Minutes.

Numbers following these letters refer to the number of a volume or bundle of letters given in the Index to Admiralty Documents in the Record Office.

The letters A, C, J, etc., are officially used to indicate the different ports and fleets :—

A is used for Portsmouth.
B ,, Plymouth.
C ,, Sheerness and the Nore.
F ,, North Sea Fleet.
J ,, Channel Fleet
N ,, Mediterranean Fleet.
P ,, Cape of Good Hope.
R ,, Jamaica.

And the numbers following refer to individual dispatches. Thus "A.S.I. 727, C 370"is letter No. 370 from the Commanding Officer at Sheerness (Admiral Buckner), to be found in the parcel No. 727 of the In-Letters.

Ann. Reg. The Annual Register, 1797 (vol. 39).
Barrow. Barrow's "Life of Howe."
Brenton. Captain Brenton's "Naval History of Great Britain," 1783—1836.
Buckingham Memoirs. "Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III.," by the Marquis of Buckingham.
Clowes. "The Royal Navy," edited by Sir W. L. Clowes.
Cunningham. "Narratives of the Occurrences that took place during the Mutiny at the Nore," by R.-Adml. Charles Cunningham.
D.N.B. Dictionary of National Biography.
Hannay. "Short History of the British Navy," and articles in the *Saturday Review* (1891), by D. Hannay.
James. "Naval History of Great Britain," by W. James.
Mason. Mason's "Life of Howe."
Neale. "History of the Mutiny at Spithead and the Nore," by W. J. Neale.
Parl. Hist. Cobbett's "Parliamentary History of England."
Patton. "Natural Defence of an Insular Empire," by V.-Adml. P. Patton.
Robinson. "The British Fleet," by Commander C. N. Robinson.
Schomberg. Schomberg's "Naval Chronology."

The Naval Mutinies of 1797.

CHAPTER I.

Unanswered Petitions.

In 1802 Canning, in a birthday ode, referred to Pitt as "the pilot that weathered the storm."[1] And the storm, which was the tempestuous period of the Revolutionary War, reached its climax in 1797. That year was one of the darkest and most perilous in English history, and it is certain that no statesman ever had to face greater difficulties than those through which Pitt was called upon to guide the country at that time. The subsidies to foreign powers had not availed to keep them in the field against France, and the drain of bullion made it necessary to suspend cash payments at the Bank of England.[2] Bonaparte had already sprung into the front rank of military commanders: Hoche was still alive, and was planning a fresh invasion of Ireland. Everywhere French arms had prevailed over the lukewarm levies of the European monarchies. The English troops themselves had been unable to bear up against the overwhelming numbers and the skilful generalship of the revolutionary forces.

Foreign affairs were not the only trouble that weighed upon the government. National credit was at a low

1. *Ann. Reg.*, 1802, p. 828.

2. Cash payments were stopped on 26 February 1797 by orders in council. The Bank Restriction Bill passed the House of Commons a week before the beginning of the Spithead mutiny. See *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 391.

ebb.[1] In all parts of the kingdom there were held county and borough meetings, at which resolutions were passed calling upon the King to dismiss the ministry.[2] Great Britain was honeycombed with secret political clubs, formed by active revolutionaries, whose desire was to set up a republic and to plant the tree of liberty. And Ireland was warming to open rebellion.

Success at sea was the sole inducement left to the English to remain in arms against France; and it was felt that the navy was the one real safeguard of the country and the constitution. Alone it allayed the dread of foreign invasion and held the revolution within the bounds of the sea. Yet the spirit of revolution invaded the navy itself, and the most important arm of the national defence was paralysed by internal revolt. For two months at the very crisis of the war the fleets in home waters lay in port, mutinous and ineffective. It is not hard to understand the anxiety felt by the government and the people when they found themselves to all appearance abandoned to drift into the chaos of revolution. Perhaps the danger was exaggerated at the time; for the outbreak came suddenly; no one was forewarned of its coming, and no one exactly understood its cause or its significance. But although it was soon clear that the majority of the seamen were too loyal to add treason to their mutiny, and although their misconduct was forgotten in the rejoicing for the great victories of the next few

1. The prices of nearly all funds went down considerably in the first half of the year. Thus 3 per cent. Consols, the lowest price of which in January was 54¼, went down to 48⅛ in May and 48 in June—partly in consequence of the mutinies. (See table in *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, Chron., p. 162.) In the article on Parker in *D.N.B.* it is said that 3 per cent. Consols sank as low as 47½, but I cannot find any mention of a smaller price than 48. Some government securities, however, (3 per cent. reduc.) sank to 46¾ in June. The mutinies cannot have had any great effect on the price of stocks, for although 3 per cent. Consols rose to 52¼ (minimum) in July, they were down again to 48¾ in October and November.

2. Five of these petitions are reprinted in *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, Chron. App., pp. 84—90, and the petition from co. Armagh appeared in the *Northern Star*, 28 April, 1797. Twenty-two county and borough meetings had already been held before 1 May, and there were seven more during the next few days.

years, it is none the less true that the danger was for a time very serious; that some of the promoters of the mutinies had other objects than those which were shown in the petitions of the seamen; and that other persons were concerned besides those whose names appear in the muster books of the fleet. But before the ultimate causes and objects can be studied, it is necessary to follow the history of the actual events.

There were two chief fleets in the home seas at this time: the Channel Fleet, under the command of Lord Bridport, a member of the Hood family, which has supplied the navy with many distinguished officers; and the North Sea fleet, which was commanded by Admiral Duncan. It was the chief business of each of these fleets to protect the coasts from invasion. Both the French and the Dutch governments were preparing expeditions to be sent into the British Isles. The French expedition was being equipped in the harbour of Brest, and the other, supervised by Hoche, but manned chiefly by Dutchmen, was in active preparation in the Texel. The fleet at Brest—the successor to the fleet which had suffered disaster in Bantry Bay—was intended for the invasion of Ireland, although there was some suspicion that it might ultimately be sent to the south-west of England. The destination of the Dutch fleet was uncertain. At different times there were rumours that it might go to Ireland, to the east coast of England, or to the Firth of Forth. Reports of the two foreign fleets were continually coming to the Admiralty or appearing in the newspapers.[1] The reports were conflicting, and

1. *E.g.*, at the beginning of May, intelligence was given that the Brest fleet was ready to sail. According to one report Bonaparte was to lead the forthcoming invasion (A.S.I. 3974, Intelligence). During the mutiny there came news as to the strength of the Dutch fleet, with the warning, "There is no doubt of a descent upon this country being in contemplation." (*Ibid.*) A rumour came to the Admiralty that the expedition to Ireland was to start on 26 May, and a later rumour from the same source gave the date as 25 June (A.S.I. 4172, Cooke to Greville, Dublin Castle, 20 May and 3 June). For the actual state of the French and Dutch fleets see Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, vol. ii, passim.

most of them were untrue—for the authorities in Brest and on the Texel were drifting through their work with singular slowness and incompetence;—but the constant expectation of invasion kept the whole country in a state of doubt and anxiety. In the early months of 1797, while the French and Dutch fleets were gradually preparing their attack, the British squadrons were making ready to oppose them. Duncan's squadron at Yarmouth was nearly equipped, and the Channel fleet was already at sea.

After the failure of the expedition to Bantry Bay,[1] Bridport cruised up and down the Channel, watching the fresh preparations in Brest and calling from time to time at the English ports. He had under his command a squadron which was known as the Grand Fleet, consisting of sixteen ships of the line and some frigates and smaller vessels.[2] Rear-Admirals Gardner, Colpoys and Pole were serving under him, and in March 1797, Sir Roger Curtis was sent with a smaller squadron to Plymouth, to cruise in the western part of the Channel.

Bridport had been made Commander-in-Chief in May 1795. His predecessor, Lord Howe, had been compelled to retire because he was suffering from a severe attack of gout.[3] After the fashion of elderly gentlemen in the eighteenth century, Howe resorted to Bath to combat the disease. But in February 1797, while the Channel fleet was at sea, his rest was disturbed by the arrival of three or four petitions from the seamen of the larger ships, asking for an increase of wages. These petitions

1. December, 1796.
2. The line of battle ships were:

Royal George (Bridport's flagship)			*Marlborough*
Royal Sovereign (Gardner's flagship)			*Minotaur*
London (Colpoys's flagship)			*Ramillies*
Queen Charlotte (formerly Howe's flagship)			*Robust*
Duke	*Pompée*	*Terrible*	*Defiance*
Glory	*Mars*	*Nymphe*	*Defence*

3. Mason, *Life of Howe*, p. 82. *D.N.B.*, vol. xxviii, pp. 97–99. He had been in command in 1794 for a short time before and after the battle of 1 June. He returned to the Channel fleet in February, 1795.

were the first symptom of discontent, but they were respectfully worded and did not contain the least suggestion of menace. On 3 March the fleet called at Portsmouth, and still there was no sign of disorder. Bridport put out to sea again, and did not return for a month. In the meantime Howe was troubled with fresh petitions, and he was at a loss to know how to deal with such unconstitutional documents. He had delegated to Bridport his command of the fleet, and any complaint on the part of the seamen should have been submitted to his successor.[1] The seamen themselves regarded the matter in a different light. They still looked up to Howe as their proper and natural leader; and indeed he had retained a nominal command for some time after his retirement. His straightforward and kindly conduct, and his victory of 1794, had given him great popularity; and as he was on land and able to appear in the House of Lords, it was expected that he would bring the grievances of the seamen before parliament. But the hope was not justified.

This is the account which Howe himself gave of his dealings with the petitions:—

"Between the second week in last February and the middle of March, being then confined by illness at Bath, I received by the post several petitions, purporting to be transmitted from different ships of the Channel fleet. They were all exact copies of each other, limited solely to a request for an increase of pay, that the seamen might be able to make better provision for their families, decently expressed, but without any signature. I could not reply to applications which were anonymous, nor acknowledge the receipt of them to parties unavowed and unascertained. About four or five of the petitions first

1. In the twenty-second Article of War it is provided "that if any person in the fleet shall find cause of complaint of the unwholesomeness of the victuals, or other just grounds, he shall quietly make the same known to his captain or commander-in-chief," who shall "cause the complaint to be presently remedied." But obviously individual demands for a rise of wages would not have any effect, and the petitions were designed to show that the grievance was generally felt. They failed for lack of signatures, and the mutiny followed as a last expedient.

received, though differing a little in the handwriting, were obviously dated by the same person, and I had therein further reason to think that they were fabricated by some malicious individual who meant to insinuate the presence of a general discontent in the fleet. Not resting, however, on this conclusion, I wrote to the officer at Portsmouth, to whom I was naturally to expect such applications would, in my absence, be addressed, to inquire whether any such dissatisfaction existed in the fleet. The answer was that no such appearance had been heard of there, and it was supposed the petitions had been framed for the purpose I suspected.[1] On the morning of the 22nd March, the day after I was able to come to town, one of the Lords of the Admiralty, now absent on service, happening to call on me, I related these particulars to him, showed him the petitions, and sent them the same day to his house in the Office, that they might be communicated to the noble earl [Spencer] who presided at that board." [2]

It is evident that neither Howe nor Spencer nor anyone at the Admiralty had a suspicion of the risk which they were encountering. And they can hardly be blamed for neglecting the petitions. The conditions of service in the navy were no worse than they had been for generations; the whole administration was working as smoothly as usual; there were no signs of insubordination; and the only indication that any of the seamen felt themselves aggrieved was the appearance of a few cautious and anonymous petitions for an increased rate of wages.

Yet all this time discontent was spreading in the fleet, and the calm was only the prelude to a sudden storm. The actual grievances of the seamen, and the questions why the outbreak should come at this particular time, and to what extent the mutiny was justifiable, must be left for separate discussion. It is enough for the present

1. This inquiry was made by Rear-Admiral Lord Hugh Seymour. In all probability Seymour contented himself with asking a few of the officers whether they had noticed any unusual discontent among their crews. (See *James*, vol. ii, p. 24.) Moreover the inquiry must have been made in the latter half of March, while the Channel fleet was at sea. Naturally no disorder had been noticed before the fleet sailed, for the seamen were purposely on their best behaviour.

2. Speech in the House of Lords, 3 May. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 476.

to say that the bolder spirits in the navy had already determined in 1796 that they would have better treatment, and that they would have recourse to violent measures, if, as was most probable, their masters would not be moved by peaceful means. Every day at their mess they grumbled at the rations of stale and maggoty bread, and the water, grown foul with long storage in slimy wooden casks. By night as they lay in their close-crowded hammocks they chafed in mind at the harshness of their lot—the irregular pittance of wages, too small to keep their families from dependence on the parish; their short supply of unwholesome food; the needless severity of the rule that kept them away from their friends for years together, even when their ship was in port; the overbearing conduct of young and inexperienced officers, and of the boatswain's mates, who had once been common seamen like themselves. They gathered in the forecastle, where no officers could overhear them, and discussed their grievances and the means of redress. These meetings gave the natural leaders of the seamen an opportunity of asserting themselves. On certain days men were allowed to go from one ship to another to pay friendly visits. At these times of "ship-visiting" the contagion of discontent was spread throughout the fleet, and the first steps were taken towards the organization which alone made an effective mutiny possible. Apparently no single individual had supreme control over the mutineers of the Channel fleet.[1] The *Queen Charlotte* had a leading part in the preliminary measures, and it may be supposed that the delegates of this ship would have considerable influence in the meetings of the

1. In the *Times* (19 April) it is said that a mutineer captain was chosen for each ship, but I have found no other mention of such appointments. The delegates were apparently the only officials elected during the mutiny, and they acted together in committees. In all matters except putting to sea the ships were under the control of the regular officers, and it is difficult to see how the two authorities could exist together.

committee.[1] But in the later petitions to parliament, which were signed, the names of the delegates of Bridport's flagship, the *Royal George*, come first.

The seamen were secretly organized in some way at least as early as December 1796; and it was proposed that they should refuse to weigh anchor when the signal for sailing was next hoisted.[2] But for some reason the proposal was never put into practice. When Bridport sailed, the seamen accompanied him without any sign of reluctance, and the mutiny was postponed for more than three months.

The conduct of the seamen at this time is very obscure, and the exact reason for the postponement cannot be known. But this is the most likely explanation: The men who met in the forecastle were a very motley company. In order to carry on the war efficiently, the Admiralty had to keep all the fleets at full strength; and as they could not persuade a large enough number of men to join the navy voluntarily, they had to resort to methods more questionable than persuasion. Men were drawn by impressment from the merchant service; debtors were encouraged by means of a substantial bounty to enlist in the navy, with the prospect of freedom and a pension if they survived the war; the metropolitan police were glad to supply the fleets with men of doubtful reputation,[3] who would have less scope for doing mischief at sea than they would at home; and many of the Irishmen whose sedition had filled the prisons of their country to overflowing, voluntarily enlisted with more subtle motives than the desire for a bounty or for the comparative freedom of the navy. These were the discontented and violent members of the fleet. But there

1. Bridport wrote on 13 April (A.S.I. 107, J 197) :—"It is reported to me that this subject proceeded from the *Queen Charlotte*." And two days later he mentioned "the *Queen Charlotte*, whose people have taken the lead in this business" (*ibid.*, J 198).

2. Bridport ascertained this fact just after the outbreak of the first mutiny at Spithead. See Bridport to Nepean, 17 April, *ibid.*, J. 207.

3. As "quota-men" for the county.

were many others, particularly among the able seamen, who felt an honest, militant loyalty to their King and country. They felt that their country treated them ungratefully, but treason was very far from their minds. Some of these men showed great ability, and had considerable influence over their fellows. It was almost certainly this leaven of temperate and loyal minds that caused the postponement of the action. Apparently the more sober-minded seamen were unwilling to have recourse to mutiny until they had tried to get redress by legal and moderate means.

The method which was adopted instead of the abandoned project was the writing of petitions to those in authority. Howe was possibly right in supposing that the petitions which he received were the work of a single individual; but he was greatly mistaken in imagining that they did not represent the general feeling of the fleet. It will be shown directly that before they were dispatched they had been read on several, if not all, of the ships, and approved by the crews. The absence of signatures is easily explained. The seamen did not know to what extent the officers were aware of their intentions. They were afraid that those whose names appeared in the petitions would be punished for insubordination, and that the men who were the first to sign would be regarded as ringleaders.

Bridport ascertained that the first petitions had been sent to the Admiralty in 1796. They were altogether disregarded. The next expedient was to send petitions to Lord Howe.[1] Apparently a first draft was composed on board the *Queen Charlotte*, and was circulated round the fleet to be inspected by the other ships' companies,

1. Eleven of these documents—all unsigned and expressed in the same language, and all addressed to Howe—are preserved in the Record Office. They were written at the end of February, or in the first ten days of March. Bridport received eleven petitions from the Admiralty Office just before the mutiny. Presumably Lord Spencer, after receiving them from Howe, sent them to Portsmouth for Bridport's inspection. A.S.I. 107, J 207; A.S.M., 14 April (Digest).

and copied. The purport of all the petitions was that the wages of seamen had never been altered since the reign of Charles II, whereas the purchasing power of money had declined materially in the meantime; and that in consequence, those seamen who had the misfortune to be married were unable to maintain their families at a proper standard of health and comfort. Two years before, the scale of wages in the army had been raised; and a corresponding increase was looked for in the naval service.[1]

But on 1 March a fresh step was taken. Another petition was drawn up on the *Queen Charlotte;* and it was addressed to the Admiralty, not from any individual ship, but from the whole of the Channel fleet. This petition called attention to other grievances beside the inadequacy of the wages. Provisions were not allowed in full weight—two ounces in every pound were retained by the purser to allow for "leakage,"—and there was room for improvement in the nature and quality of the provisions which did reach them. Sick men were not properly cared for on board, and too often the delicacies prescribed for them only went to nourish the surgeons' mates. Ships' companies were altogether forbidden to go ashore when the ships were in port, until they had been paid off. Men who were wounded in action and rendered unfit for service were dismissed without any continuance of their pay. The petition ended with an assurance that no other complaints than these would be preferred by the fleet.[2]

The first circulation of the petition from the *Queen Charlotte* gave rise to some interesting correspondence.

1. The grievances of the seamen are dealt with in Book V. The substance of the petitions is only given here for the sake of clearness in the narrative.

2. Copies of the petitions are given in the Appendix. A copy of this petition was sent to the Admiralty by Bridport on 17 April (J209), and the petition addressed to the Board on 18 April, when they came to Portsmouth, was in exactly the same form; but it was signed by the delegates of the fleet (*Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, pp. 240, 241).

When the seamen of the *London* had read their copy, one of them wrote this letter to the authors :—

"The resolutions is generous : the intention noble. In short it is worthy of the conquerors of the Glorious First of June. I beg leave, however, to mention one thing which you have forgot. You intreat his Lordship to intercede (with) the Board of Admiralty for augmentation of pay. But that is not under their jurisdiction to do ; it is a national affair, and must be addressed to the hon. House of Commons. It is from them alone we can expect redress. They are the purse bearers of the nation. Let them be petitioned, and I make no doubt but their generosity . . . . Proceed in caution, peace, and good behaviour. Let no disorder nor tumult influence your proceedings, and I have not the least doubt but your late glorious commander [Lord Howe] will step forth in behalf of his fellow-conquerors." [1]

Some one on board the *Queen Charlotte* answered that it was only right to send the petitions to the Lords of the Admiralty in the first place, and that the Admiralty would certainly take umbrage if they were not consulted. If they approved the petitions, they would bring the matter before Parliament, and the seamen would thus have the support of the ministry. If the Admiralty did not respond, appeal to Parliament would still be open.

Another letter from the *Queen Charlotte*, addressed to Weyman Brown, of the *Minotaur*, was written at the end of a copy of the original petition :—

"Messmate,

If your ship's company approve of the enclosed petition, you are requested to get a fair copy, and let us know on what day it will be convenient for you to send it, that they may go by the one post, as it will be the means of insuring success by showing it to [be] the general wish of the fleet. Let it be

1. From papers of the *Queen Charlotte*, 25 February, A.S.I. 5125. This letter, of course, was unsigned ; but its style resembles that of a remarkable letter, written a few weeks later by John Fleming, a delegate of the *London* (see Appendix A, p. 376), and it is possible that both were composed by the same man. Fleming was one of the men of strong and sober character, who succeeded in moderating the violence of the mutiny, and so won and kept the support of the nation.

directed to Lord Howe, without signature at bottom—only the ship's name and day of the month. Therefore, wishing it success,

We are yours, etc., etc., The *Charlottes*.

Send one copy to your acquaintance, and every other ship with these directions. Direct for any man on board of us with whom you are acquainted. We think Tuesday 7th [March] will be a proper day, as there will be sufficient time to collect the sense of the fleet." [1]

The petitions were collected together on the *Queen Charlotte* and sent in a batch to Lord Howe. They were not all ready by 7 March, for one—from the *Theseus*—was dated on the 8th, and another—from the *Bellerophon*—on the 10th. The fleet was at sea at that time, and the bundle of documents must have been sent to Lord Howe from the sea by transport.[2] During the greater part of March Bridport was cruising off Brest; all the while the seamen were waiting to know the result of their first bid for redress; and they were doing their duty with diligence, the better to secure the favour of their superiors and of the politicians who held the purse-strings, and the more effectually to blind their officers to the plans which they were already agitating in darkness—plans for a great reprisal in case their moderate petitions should not be allowed.

If only Howe could have foreseen the coming crisis, if he could have understood that the seamen were unanimous and determined, he had it in his power to pacify them and to prevent them from rising in mutiny. On the day of the first outbreak, Bridport wrote with justifiable bitterness: "I have very much to lament that

1. A.S.I. 107, J 202, forwarded by Bridport, 16 April. Weyman Brown was not a delegate; probably he was only an acquaintance of the writer. It is clear even from this letter alone how carefully the leaders of the movement concealed their identity. They did not come forward publicly until they had determined to mutiny: there was then no occasion for secrecy. The men to whom these letters were addressed must have run some risk of detection; but the mere receipt of such communications could hardly be treated as a serious offence.

2. Bridport called at Portsmouth on 3 March; and one bundle of petitions may have been sent to Howe then.

some answer had not been given to the various letters transmitted to Earl Howe and the Admiralty, which would, in my humble opinion, have prevented the disappointment and ill-humour which at present prevails in the ships under my orders."[1] Unfortunately, Howe failed to appreciate the urgency and importance of the petitions, and as they were unconstitutional, he felt himself bound to disregard them.

1. A.S.I. 107, J 198, 15 April.

CHAPTER II.

The Outbreak.

The fleet returned to port on 30 March.[1] A month had passed since the demands of the seamen had been communicated to Lord Howe; but there was not so much as a bare acknowledgement awaiting the sailors on their arrival. Still they remained passive and obedient for another fortnight, looking for the answer that never came. At the end of that time, realizing too well that their desires would not be granted for the asking, they ventured on the bold step which had already been determined as a last resource, and refused to weigh anchor again until their grievances should be redressed.

The mutiny broke out with amazing suddenness: none of the officers had any knowledge of the preparations that had been made until the crisis was almost upon them. Many of them were ashore when the mutiny began. Bridport himself had gone inland, and only returned to Portsmouth on 10 April.[2] By that time the seamen had made their decision: their general course of action was settled, and it only remained to arrange the details. Strict secrecy was no longer necessary. While they were off duty men gathered in groups in various parts of the ships, even before the eyes of the officers, to discuss their programme; and though the daily routine was carried on in an orderly manner, the admiral had to report on the 13th, that "disagreeable combinations" were forming, particularly on the *Queen Charlotte*.[3] Next day (Good Friday) Sir Peter Parker, the

1. A.S.I. 1022, A 295, Parker to Nepean.
2. A.S.I. 1022, A 330, Parker to Nepean.
3. A.S.I. 107, J 197.

admiral in command of the naval station at Portsmouth, was able to give more definite information :—

> " Be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that I have received a private intimation that the crews of some of his Majesty's ships at Spithead (particularly the *Queen Charlotte* and *Royal Sovereign*) who had petitioned for an increase of wages, were dissatisfied, and intended to refuse doing their duty till their wages is increased; that a correspondence is secretly carrying on between the different ships' companies, and that Tuesday next at noon a signal is intended to be made from the *Queen Charlotte* (by hoisting a Union Jack and firing two guns) for the other ships to follow her example . . . . Their Lordships, knowing whether any petitions have been received by them from the seamen relative to an increase of wages, will be able to determine what degree of credit should be given to the information I have received on that subject." [1]

Parker added in a postscript that he was surprised to find that Bridport knew of the dissatisfaction prevailing in the fleet, and said that he would privately warn the captains to sleep on their ships—a remedy that was not quite adequate to the disorder.

The fifteenth of April must have been an anxious and busy day for everyone concerned with the fleet at Portsmouth and Spithead. The admirals were continually receiving messages or writing dispatches; the captains and lieutenants were preparing to maintain order to the best of their ability, in case the threatened mutiny should become violent; and among the ships lying at anchor there must have been a constant passage of boats, conveying letters and petitions, or carrying the men to

1. Parker to Nepean (A.S.I. 1022, A 341). Mr. D. Hannay (vol, ii, p. 362) says that Captain Patton, of the Transport Office at Portsmouth, was the first officer who had news of the seamen's intentions; that he sent a message to the Admiralty by semaphore, and that the Admiralty by way of reply ordered Bridport to sail without delay. But Patton cannot have discovered the secret long before Bridport did; for the order was not sent until the 15th, and Bridport had written to ask for instructions on the 13th. It is possible, of course, that Bridport had his information from Patton. In the rough minutes of the Board the following note occurs: "13. At night—first int. by Capt." I imagine that the note, if it were written out fully, would read: "13 April. At night—first intimation by Captain Patton." (A.S.M. 136.)

whom were entrusted the final arrangements for the new order that was to begin on the morrow. In the meantime the Lords of the Admiralty, knowing that something was amiss at Spithead, but ignorant of the extent of the trouble, decided quite rightly that the seamen would do less mischief when they were fully employed on the open sea than they would when their ships were lying idle in port. And instructions were sent to Bridport "to hold himself in constant readiness to put to sea at the shortest notice," and to send Sir Alan Gardner with eight of the largest ships to St. Helens.[1] If the Lords of the Admiralty had known what was happening at Spithead on this day, they might with advantage have spared themselves the trouble.

Though there had not been any overt act of insubordination, it was clear enough to all the officers that mischief was afoot;[2] and the news that had reached Sir Peter Parker on the previous day was confirmed by a marine of the *Royal Sovereign*, who told his captain that if the petitions that had been sent in were not answered, two guns would be fired from the *Royal George*, as a signal for a general mutiny.[3] The intention of the seamen at this time was to wait until noon on Easter Tuesday (18 April), and then to rise in mutiny when the signal should be given. The Admiralty still thought that the disorder could be suppressed[4]: Bridport, better informed, knew that resistance was hopeless, and from the first he advised conciliation. "I . . . . conclude," he wrote, "their Lordships will not direct the squadron

1. A.S.O. 133 (Orders and Instructions), p. 30, 15 April.
2. It is mentioned in the *Times* (19 April) that cheering from the forecastle—a characteristic feature of the mutinies—began on the 15th; but there is no indication of any more serious breach of discipline on that day.
3. A.S.I. 107, J 202.
4. They directed Parker to see to it that all captains of ships at Portsmouth should sleep on board, and should repress any display of insubordination. The ringleaders were to be arrested, and no communication was to be allowed among the ships, or between the fleet and the shore. (A.S.M. 136, 15 April.)

to proceed to sea, before some answer is given to these petitions, as I am afraid it could not be put in execution without the appearance of serious consequences, which the complexion of the fleet sufficiently indicates." [1] Unfortunately at the time when Bridport wrote this warning, the order to sail had already been sent; and the "serious consequences" were not slow to follow. But they came on the next day, and the events of the 15th are not yet quite exhausted.

Most of the communications between the men of different ships must have been made by word of mouth; but one curious document remains to illuminate the darkness of that anxious day. It is a letter from an unknown seaman of the *Royal Sovereign* to the crew of the *Defence*. The latter ship was lying at Spithead when the Channel fleet returned, and—evidently towards the end of the fortnight of waiting—her company had joined with the others in their demand for increased wages. These are the instructions sent by the *Royal Sovereign*:—

"Friends,

I am happy to hear of your honourable [2] courage towards redress. We are carrying on the business with the greatest expeditions. We flatter ourselves with that hopes that we shall obtain our wishes, for they had betters go to war with the whole globe than with their own subjects. We mean the day that the petitions go to London to take charge of the ships until we have a proper answer from Government. The signal will be first made by the *Queen Charlotte*. The first signal is the Union Jack at the main with two guns fired: this is for taking charge and sending the officers and women [3] out of every ship. The second signal is a red flag at the mizzen topmast head, and two guns: this is to send a speaker from every ship. The petitions is to be ready to go on

1. J 198, 15 April.
2. This reading is doubtful.
3. Women were regularly allowed to go on board while the ships were in port. The fact that they were sent away suggests that the seamen were prepared for violent measures.

Monday if possible. You must send them and your letters to Mr. Pink, the Bear and Ragged Staff, as that is our post office. Direct one petition to Evan Nepean, Secretary to the Admiralty. The other to Honourable Charles James Fox, South Street, Grosvenor Square.

Success to the proceedings." [1]

The state of affairs on the 15th may be judged fairly accurately from this letter, though it is impossible to reconstruct the actual events in any detail. It was a time of suspicion and suspense. The seamen were still obedient to their officers; but every one knew that the obedience would soon end. The officers did not yet know whether they would have to attempt the hopeless task of enforcing their orders on a majority of turbulent men. And the men themselves had by no means settled their plan of action. On this day they evidently expected that the officers would soon be deprived of their command and sent ashore—a measure which might well be resisted with violence. They were not certain when the mutiny was to begin: it might be on the Monday or the Tuesday (17 or 18 April), according to the time at which the petitions were ready.

The opening of the mutiny was heralded with a great outburst of petitions.[2] All the previous petitions had been ignored, and up to the very eve of the mutiny it was still believed at the Admiralty that they were the work of a single mischievous individual. This time the seamen were determined that there should be no doubt as to the scale of the discontent. The petitions were signed—one written on the sixteenth was signed by the delegates of the whole fleet—and all the ships' companies

1. A.S.I. 1022, A 355. This letter was sent to Parker by Captain Wells, of the *Defence*, together with a copy of the original petition from the *Queen Charlotte*. This copy was sent to the *Defence*, as it had probably been sent to several other ships before, so that two fresh copies could be taken and dispatched in the name of the *Defence* to the Admiralty and to Fox. The petition and the letter fell into the hands of some petty officers of the *Defence*, who gave them to the first-lieutenant. The letter is dated 15 April.

2. I have found sixteen that were written on 15, 16 or 17 April.

had agreed not to weigh anchor until their grievances were redressed. Not even the most obstinate of boards of Admiralty could misread petitions which were so emphasized.

Thus the fifteenth of April passed in seeming quiet, yet disturbed by a cold breath of suspicion, like the trembling of wind that gives forewarning of a gale.

On the sixteenth, Bridport received the ill-timed order to prepare for sailing.[1] He knew the danger of trying to compel the seamen to weigh anchor,[2] but he was bound to convey the instructions of the Admiralty to Gardner. The result was disastrous. Gardner gave the order on the *Royal Sovereign* to prepare the ship for sea and to hoist in the launch, but the crew refused to obey him.[3] The refusal was apparently the signal for mutiny. Boats put out from the *Queen Charlotte* and from Bridport's flagship, the *Royal George*, and began a tour of the fleet. No guns were fired, and no red flags were hoisted to mark the beginning of the mutiny: the order from the Admiralty forestalled the appointed signals, and the suspense was brought to an end with a suddenness that must have surprised both the officers and the seamen.[4] Thus the mutiny broke out before its time,

1. A.S.I. 107, J. 205, and above, p. 18.

2. He wrote in answer to the instructions: "I beg to refer their Lordships to mine of yesterday's date (15 Apr.) and its enclosures" (see above, p. 18), J 205.

3. J 203.

4. In nearly all accounts of the mutiny it is said that the outbreak occurred on 15 April when the crews were ordered to put to sea. *E.g.*, according to the *Annual Register* (p. 209) Bridport on 15 April made the signal to prepare for sailing, and the fleet, beginning with the *Queen Charlotte*, refused to obey. Brenton (vol. i, p. 414) says explicitly that the signal 154 to prepare for sailing was given on Easter Sunday, 15 April. The same mistake is made by James (vol. ii, p. 23), and it has been copied, I believe, by every subsequent writer who has tried to give the date of the outbreak. Brenton is right in saying that the mutiny began on Easter Day, but Easter Day was 16 April. I am inclined to think that Bridport never gave a general order to prepare for sailing. He does not mention such an occurrence in his letters; and it seems quite probable that the mutiny began when Gardner tried to take his squadron to St. Helens.

when scarcely half the petitions were finished, and before the plans of the seamen were properly arranged.

The men from the *Queen Charlotte* and the *Royal George*, in their tour round the fleet, boarded each ship and addressed the crew. They had very wisely decided that the officers should still be allowed to command the ships, and that their orders should be obeyed as usual, except in the matter of putting to sea. Each ship's company was instructed to choose two [1] men to represent the ship on a central committee, and to send these men in the evening to the *Queen Charlotte*. For the present the whole fleet was to remain passive, waiting until the petitions were answered by the Admiralty. When the boats came to the *London*, Admiral Colpoys, who was in command of the ship, refused to let the men come on board, and called out the marines. There might have been a struggle, but the danger was averted by a message from Bridport, that Colpoys should not resist the intruders. They mounted the quarter-deck, and addressed the crew in moderate terms. Then they withdrew to the forecastle where (according to Colpoys's nephew, who was captain of the *London*) "it is reasonable to suppose a very different language was held." It is very probable that the language held in the forecastle was only to the effect that delegates should be chosen. Possibly, also, the crew were asked whether they had any particular grievances of their own.

1. It is an indication of Neale's inaccuracy that he was not sure whether two or four delegates were sent from each ship. Towards the end of the second mutiny at Spithead, Bridport and Captain Bedford received letters from the *Royal Sovereign* asking them to persuade Gardner to return to the ship (J 293). The letters were signed by the "Committee of the *Royal Sovereign*": in two cases there were nine names, in the third there were eleven. It appears, therefore, that this ship had a committee of its own, distinct from the central committee of delegates, and presumably there were similar committees on the other ships. But these committees, in all probability, were only appointed in the second mutiny, when a large number of officers were sent ashore. During the first mutiny the officers were still in command, and there could be very little use for committees on the separate ships. At the Nore the officers were deprived of their authority, and each ship was controlled by a committee, with a president who acted as the captain.

The delegates were duly elected, and met in the Admiral's cabin on board the *Queen Charlotte*. There at length the inchoate suggestions were formed into a definite plan of action; and rules were drawn up for the conduct of the fleet.

The mutiny was now fairly afoot. The fact that it was begun without violence was due to Bridport, who saw no hope of regaining his authority by any other method than conciliation. He had allowed the men of the *Queen Charlotte* to board all the other ships with impunity, and he had raised no objection when the delegates met in the admiral's cabin. He explained his position clearly in the letters he wrote to the Admiralty on this day:—

> "With respect to the using vigorous and effectual measures for getting the better of the crews of the ships at Spithead, their Lordships will see that it is impossible to be done, or securing the ringleaders. I therefore see no method of checking the progress of this business but by complying in some measure with the prayer of the petitions." [1] . . . . "I trust vigorous measures will not be necessary, as the men on board the *Royal George*, *Queen Charlotte* and several other ships have no objection to go to sea, provided an answer is given to their petitions." [2]

On his own initiative Bridport took a step towards an agreement with the seamen. He ordered each of the captains to ask his ship's company for a statement of their grievances, and received in reply some interesting particulars of the conditions of life in the fleet.[3] He also sent Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Morice Pole to London, to give to the Admiralty a full account of the outbreak of mutiny.

Bridport's opinion was quite right. If the officers had tried to put down the mutiny by their own efforts, the only result would have been a series of conflicts in which

1. A.S.I. 107, J 202, 16 April. This letter is Bridport's answer to the order of the 15th. (See above, p. 18.)
2. A.S.I. 107, J 205, 16 April.
3. See below, Chaps. xviii—xx.

the seamen would inevitably have had the advantage. The garrison at Portsmouth was small, and even if it had been strong enough to cope with the resistance of the fleet, the temper of the soldiers was doubtful. Only two years before they themselves had been on the verge of mutiny, and there was still a great deal of unrest in the army. The soldiers could not be expected willingly to take up arms against a cause with which they were wholly in sympathy. Discipline could only be maintained in the fleet by the consent of the common seamen, and because of the habit of obedience which was necessary for the success of the navy. The seamen knew that if they were unanimous, they were strong enough to defy the Articles of War; and in this instance, though some of them may have been fearful of the consequences of mutiny, they were unanimous in wishing for an increase of their wages and an improvement in their diet. And further, if the mutiny had been due to a sudden outburst of malice, the government would have had the support of the nation in bringing every possible force to bear for its suppression. But the seamen had already tried legitimate means for the redress of their grievances and had failed. The Admiralty had put themselves in the wrong by neglecting the petitions. There was clearly no choice for Bridport: he was bound to surrender to the demands of the fleet. He was quite justified in writing:—

> "Their Lordships desire me to use every means in my power to restore the discipline of the fleet. Would to God I had influence sufficient for this important object, which nothing in my opinion will be able to effect, but a compliance with their petitions." [1]

It would have been well if Bridport could have carried this policy thoroughly into effect. Unfortunately the strength of the seamen's determination was not appre-

1. A.S.I. 107, J 208.

ciated in the least degree at the Admiralty. The Board were inclined rather to hush up the disorder than to remove the cause of it. Their attitude of mind may be judged from the instructions that they sent to Bridport on 16 April. He was told to restrict his answer to this bare acknowledgement :—

> " The application has been communicated to their Lordships and the subject will have that serious consideration which its importance requires." [1]

In the same letter the order for putting to sea was repeated, and a few hours later it was given for the third time, although in the interval Admiral Pole had arrived in London and had disclosed the real gravity of the situation.[2] Bridport, acting without a doubt against his own judgement, made the answer known to the fleet; and he added :—

> " The Commander-in-Chief trusts this answer will be satisfactory, and that the different ships' companies will immediately return to their duty, as the service of the country requires their proceeding to sea." [3]

The announcement was, of course, thoroughly unsatisfactory. If the Board had understood how deep-seated was the discontent in the navy they would never have imagined that the seamen would be put off with such an unpromising statement. Its vague and non-committal terms only served to suggest that the petitions were not in fact being taken seriously. Conciliation was the only practicable course, and it was the more desirable since the delegates were so moderate and statesmanlike in their behaviour. They wrote quite truly in one of the petitions, " We know when to cease to ask as well as to begin."

1. Nepean to Bridport, 16 April, A.S.M. 136. It is the answer to Bridport's letter, quoted above, p. 18.
2. Nepean to Bridport, *ibid.*, 17 April; the letter was written at 1 a.m., immediately after an interview with Pole, who had arrived at midnight.
3. A.S.I. 107, J 208, 17 April.

Their moderation is well illustrated by an incident that happened on 17 April. Two ships, the *Romney* and the *Venus*, had been ordered to convoy cargo boats from Portsmouth to Newfoundland. But the crew of the *Romney*, wishing to play their part in the coercion of the Admiralty, refused to unmoor when their captain gave the order, at mid-day.[1] They remained obstinate all that day; but on the next day wiser counsels prevailed. They moved down to St. Helens, and sailed with their convoy on the twentieth.[2] The cause of their return to duty was undoubtedly a letter from the *Queen Charlotte*, advising them to put to sea at once. The question had come before the delegates, and they had unanimously decided that the *Romney* and the *Venus* ought not to join the mutiny, because the delay in the sailing of the convoy would imply an injury to trade.[3] This decision was well calculated to please the Admiralty and the nation as a whole, and it showed sound judgement on the part of the delegates.

The rule of the delegates began in earnest on 17 April. Every man in the fleet took an oath to support the mutiny—a practice possibly borrowed from the political societies on shore. A few of the more unpopular officers received notice to quit. They were not in any way roughly handled or disrespectfully treated: they were simply told that the crew wished them to leave the ship, and that boats would be ready at a certain time to take them ashore. They went, as they were bound to do, without making any resistance. Ropes were hung from

1. Captain Sotheron to Sir P. Parker, 17 April, A.S.I. 1022, A 356.
2. *Ibid.*, A 357.
3. "To the Seamen on board His Majesty's Ship *Romney*. It is the desire and earnest wish of the fleet that you will proceed peaceably and regularly to sea with the convoy you shall have under your charge, as we should in no wise wish to bring the injury of our country in our cause; and we shall proceed in your behalf in a regular way; and we are fully satisfied of your loyalty in our cause, and remain yours, H.M. Ship *Queen Charlotte*" (A.S.I. 1022, A 356). This answer was read to the ship's company by Captain Sotheron on the 17th, but its effect was not immediate. The question was debated that evening by the crew, and they did not decide to return to duty until the next day.

the yardarms, not to intimidate the remaining officers, but as a warning to turbulent seamen that mutiny was not anarchy, and that in assuming authority over the fleet the delegates had assumed the power of life and death over their fellow-mutineers.[1] The delegates must have been men of very powerful character, for although there were many mischievous or revolutionary persons in the fleet who would have been glad to adopt far more violent measures, the duties of the ships were still carried out as usual without the least disorder. This fact is a remarkable testimony to the strength and moderation of the delegates, the general honesty of purpose of the seamen, and the discipline which had been instilled into the crews by the officers.[2]

One of the most striking features of this mutiny was the unanimity of the seamen. There may have been some friction among them, but the memory of it has not remained. The whole mutiny, particularly by contrast with the events that followed at the Nore, appears to have been worked with remarkable smoothness. Even the "good and leading men" joined in the mutiny with a whole heart;[3] the marines took the oath together with the seamen;[4] and the patients at Haslar found strength to raise three cheers when they heard the news of the mutiny, and hung from the windows flags made of handkerchiefs pieced together.[5] It is difficult to judge how much part the petty officers had with the mutineers.

1. *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, p. 209.

2. "The crew, however, perform all the duties of the ship, except weighing anchor; and unanimously express their determination to face the French if they attempt an invasion, like Britons." (*Belfast News Letter*, 21 April, 1797: Report from an officer of the *Royal George*.)

3. Gardner to Bridport, 16 April, J 202.

4. The marines of the *London* formed up obediently when Colpoys called them out on the 16th; and it was a marine who gave Bridport news of the preparations for mutiny. On the whole the marines did not seem so zealous as the seamen. It may be that the mutiny was organized by the seamen, and that the marines were left to play a secondary part. But Bridport wrote on 17 April (J 207): "The marines of this ship, and I suppose of all others of the fleet have taken a decided part in favour of the seamen, and been forced to take an oath to that purpose."

5. *Belfast News Letter*, 21 April; *Times*, 19 April.

Some of them must have supported the movement, although others undoubtedly stood by the superior officers. [1]

1. The petty officers had been common seamen themselves, and many of them must have had relatives who were still common seamen. But some of the complaints of the various crews were against the conduct of the petty officers—*e.g.*, boatswain's mates—who must have been enemies to the mutiny. Captain Sotheron, of the *Romney*, said that the petty officers of the quarter-deck stood by him loyally; but, on the other hand, it should be noticed that the letter from the *Romney* to the *Royal George* was written on behalf of the petty officers as well as the seamen. And the petty officers shared in the increase of wages and the other concessions granted by the Admiralty at this time. John Fleming, the delegate of the *London*, was a gunner's mate; but although he wrote, "I was . . . as unanimous as any member of the fleet in desiring a redress of your grievances," his influence was used almost entirely in restraining the force of the mutiny.

CHAPTER III.

Negotiations and Reform.

Admiral Pole returned on the seventeenth. He had been to London, had had his interview, and brought back the surprising message: "That the Lords of the Admiralty were well inclined to the prayer of the seamen's petition, and were coming down to decide upon it."[1]

The news of their intention must have been welcome to the fleet. It was clear at last that the demands would not be answered by attempts at blind repression, but rather that the grievances were in a fair way to be redressed. On one point, however, the delegates were determined: they must have the assurance that any concessions granted to them would be confirmed by Parliament, and that their violation of the Articles of War would be pardoned by the King. And in the spirit of this determination they prepared to meet their rulers. As for the Lords of the Admiralty themselves, it is not hard to imagine their feelings: the consternation at this new and sudden difficulty which confronted them at the most critical period of the war; the irritation against the factious body of seamen who had caused the trouble; and, above all, the regret at their mistake in following the advice of an officer who had lost touch with the fleet, and making light of demands that were echoed in every British warship the whole world over.

Whatever may have been the cause of this new determination—whether it was due to Pole's representation, whether Spencer had changed his mind, or whether the suggestion came from some of the other ministers or from the King himself—the change of policy was

1. *Belfast News Letter*, u.s.; *Times*, 19 April.

remarkably sudden. In the early morning of the seventeenth the Board still had thoughts of setting aside the petitions and hurrying the fleet out to sea. Before the end of the day three of them had set out to Portsmouth to hear the claims of the seamen. The deputation consisted of Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Richard Arden, and Admiral Young; with them came Marsden, the second secretary.[1] They left London at five o'clock in the afternoon, and reached Portsmouth on the following day (18th) at noon. They made no pause after the journey, but immediately held a Board at the Fountain Inn.[2] Bridport and other officers

1. Spencer was a politician from his youth upwards. He entered Parliament when he was twenty-three years old; and, after a short service as Ambassador in Vienna, became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1794, at the age of thirty-six. He held the position with considerable success for about six years (*D.N.B.*, vol. liii, pp. 355, 356). An estimate of his policy during the mutinies is given below, pp. 97, 98.

Sir Richard Pepper Arden was a civil lord of the Admiralty, and a distinguished lawyer. He was afterwards given the title of Baron Alvanley. He received his early education at the Manchester Grammar School, and afterwards became a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. While he was reading law in the Middle Temple he became acquainted with Pitt, and they remained close friends during the rest of Pitt's life. Arden eventually reached the position of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (*ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 74, 75).

Young was at this time a Rear-Admiral. He had taken part in the attack on Toulon, in 1793. In the following year he led the assault on the tower in Martella Bay, which resulted indirectly in the building of "martello" towers on the English coast. From 1804 to 1807 he was the port admiral at Plymouth, and he commanded the North Sea fleet in the latter years of the war (*ibid.*, vol. lxiii, pp. 400, 401).

Marsden combined in a curious way the qualities of a scholar and an administrator. He had lived in Sumatra, and had taken a considerable part in the government. His residence in the East gave him an interest in oriental studies, and he became a leading authority on Eastern history, languages, customs and coinage. Soon after his return to England he was appointed to the second secretaryship to the Board of Admiralty. In 1804 he succeeded Sir Evan Nepean as first secretary, and held the position until 1807 (*ibid.*, vol. xxxvi, pp. 260, 207).

Nepean himself never played a prominent part in the dealings with the mutineers; nor is there any indication of the influence which he may have had on the policy of the Admiralty. But he did a vast amount of work in connexion with the Mutinies. From the number of "out-letters" which he wrote, and the number of "in-letters" docketed by him, I judge that he must have been one of the busiest men in the country.

2. A.S.M. 136 (Rough Minutes); *Times*, 19 April. The whole of this account of the negotiations at Portsmouth, with the exception of those facts for which other references are given, is based on the official report in the Rough Minutes.

described to them the state of the fleet, and a project of reform was issued as a basis of negotiations. The project had probably been drafted at the Admiralty on the previous day, for the policy of the Board had been decided then. Their journey to Portsmouth was practically an announcement that they were willing to treat with the seamen. A readiness to negotiate implied a readiness to yield some measure of reform. So that in deciding to go to Portsmouth the Lords of the Admiralty, in all likelihood, decided as well the extent of the concessions that they were willing to make.

The project was addressed not to the seamen nor to their delegates—who could not be recognized officially—but to Bridport, who, according to the Articles of War, was the proper intermediary between the fleet and the Admiralty. The whole negotiation was carried on in this way: the seamen writing petitions to the Board, and the Board answering by instructions to Bridport. The first proposals of the Admiralty were that the wages of petty officers and able seamen should be raised by four shillings a month, those of ordinary seamen by three shillings and those of landsmen by two shillings; and that wounded seamen should still receive their usual wages until they were cured; or, if they were discharged as unfit for service, that they should either receive pensions or be sent to Greenwich Hospital.[1] The petitions had drawn attention to the bad quality and the short allowance of victuals, to the ill-treatment of sick men, and to the prohibition from going ashore when the ships were in port; but the Admiralty ignored all these things, and Bridport was left to face the delegates with a grudging concession of only two of their demands.

These proposals were committed to Bridport's three flag-officers, Gardner, Colpoys and Pole, who took them to the delegates on the *Queen Charlotte*. The delegates promised to give an answer at ten o'clock the next

1. *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 241; *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii, 497.

morning. The Board met again on the 19th, and waited throughout the morning. At one o'clock there came a note from Gardner to tell them that they must wait until four o'clock. Finally, at half-past five, while they were at their dinner, the answer came. It was written according to the habit of the seamen in the form of a petition.[1] The delegates now stated definitely the amount of increase in wages that they expected. Since the time of Cromwell able seamen had been paid 22s. 6d. a month, and ordinary seamen 19s. They now demanded that these wages should be raised to 28s. and 23s. 6d. respectively, and that marines should have the same pay at sea that they had on land. Again they insisted on an improvement in the victuals: "leakage" must stop; the nominal pound of bread and meat must be a real pound, instead of the customary fourteen ounces. Cheese, butter and liquor must be supplied in full measure; and all provisions must be of better quality. Vegetables must be served when they could be had; and the supplies of fresh beef must not be curtailed by the substitution of flour for part of the fair share of meat. Lastly, pensions at Greenwich Hospital should be raised to £10 a year from the Chatham Chest.[2]

The delegates objected to the mention of "landsmen" and the lower wages to be paid to them. They said: "There never has existed but two orders of men in the navy, able and ordinary, therefore the distinction between ordinary seamen and landsmen is totally new." This clause must have been included at the instance of some of the delegates who were themselves landsmen.[1] Experienced sailors would hardly feel it a grievance that the raw recruits should be paid lower wages than those of an ordinary seaman; it would be more natural for them to complain, as did the labourers in the parable, if

1. *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 242. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 498. The full text is given below, Appendix A, p. 368.

2. *E.g.*, Valentine Joyce, who had lately been a tobacconist in Belfast, and was now a delegate of the *Royal George* and one of the most prominent men in the fleet.

the amount of wages that they received were given also to the new comers.

The first two days of bargaining had not produced any great result. The Admiralty had offered poor terms; the seamen had rejected the terms, and had stated their demands more exactly and emphatically. It was a difficult position for the Lords of the Admiralty. If on the first day there still lurked in their minds a suspicion that the mutiny was to some extent a bogus affair, that the fleet was not really united, and that a show of reluctance on their part would silence the delegates, any such suspicion was removed by the answer that came on the 19th. They saw that if the mutiny was not to become dangerous they must either take active measures to suppress it, or make some further compromise. But conciliation was painful. To the seamen the treasury of state may have seemed to be a vast hoard of wealth into which they were dipping too lightly. But the rulers of the navy knew too well by how many hundreds of millions of pounds the war was increasing the national debt, and they were loth to add needlessly to the burden.

Moreover the rejection of their terms and the fresh demands of the seamen had given them the false but very natural impression that the mutineers would continue to heap new demands upon them, so long as they showed any disposition to yield. They determined that "a stand must be made somewhere," and that it would be wise to make the stand at once. Accordingly they drew up a note for Bridport, telling him that the Board could not go beyond the terms of their first offer; that an immediate return to duty would be rewarded with a complete pardon; but that if the seamen were still disobedient they should be visited with the dreadful punishment prescribed by the Articles of War. It was as though a beleaguered maniple should threaten to destroy a legion of assailants. The Board were evidently aware of the risk that they were incurring, for they

decided to submit their bold counsel to the officers of the fleet before trying to put it into effect. In a spirit of doubt and daring they adjourned the meeting.

Three days earlier the Lords of the Admiralty had determined to yield nothing to the mutineers, and within a few hours their resolution was completely broken down. Now again they decided on a policy of resistance, and again after a single night the policy was reversed. Early in the morning of the 20th they met the senior officers of the fleet—four admirals and sixteen captains—in accordance with their wise decision of the previous night. The first business of the meeting was to consider a scheme, devised by the Board, of slipping the cables and taking the ships to St. Helens, leaving only those the crews of which were the most refractory. It was hoped that by this means the greater part of the fleet could be taken out to sea, and the mutiny brought within manageable limits. The Lords of the Admiralty clearly thought that the majority of the seamen were moved against their will by a small body of agitators. The officers, who understood the real state of the fleet, knew that the seamen were unanimous in their determination not to weigh anchor. They knew that it would be impossible for them to move a single ship without the sanction of the delegates. Bridport alone thought that the plan might be tried; Gardner was doubtful; Colpoys and all the captains were against the proposal.

The idea of resistance was abandoned, and Spencer brought forward the question of conciliation. The officers urged that the new demands should be granted, and they expressed the opinion, which had not been shared by the Board, that this concession would put an end to the mutiny. Spencer and his colleagues were forced, very much against their will, to accept this advice. After considering and rejecting three or four suggestions for compromise they drew up a new project in which they granted all the financial terms which the delegates

had demanded. They promised to recommend to the King and to Parliament that able seamen should be paid 1s. od. a day—an increase of 5s. 6d. a month on their previous wages; that all petty officers should have their wages raised by the same amount; and that ordinary seamen should have an increase of 4s. 6d.; and landsmen 3s. 6d. The Admiralty were determined that there should be landsmen, and they won their point. They made some further concessions. Marines were to have the same wages on sea as on land; provisions were to be supplied in full measure, or when they ran short an allowance of money would be given instead; and wounded men were to receive their full wages.

Thus the most important demands of the delegates had been conceded. But still no mention was made of the quality of the food, of the pensions at Greenwich, or of leave to go ashore when the ships were in port.

Nearly all effective bargains and tactful negotiations are brought about by a mixture of firmness and conciliation. The Lords of the Admiralty felt that they had done their part in conciliating the seamen, and that, to save their self-respect, they must make some show of firmness. Accordingly they ordered the seamen to return immediately to duty, under pain of the loss of their smart-money and pensions, and of exclusion from Greenwich Hospital.[1] Copies of these resolutions were sent to the captains and were read by them to their ships' companies on the following morning (21st). The crews received the announcement with satisfaction. But they were so completely subject to their ringleaders that not one of them would weigh anchor without an order from the delegates. Captain Holloway, of the *Duke*, reported that he had assembled his ship's company and had nearly persuaded them to return to their duty, when a seaman who remained in the back of the crowd told them

1. The text of this document is given in Appendix A, p. 371.

that they must wait to see what was done on the *Queen Charlotte;* and his word immediately defeated Holloway's efforts. The same spirit was shown throughout the fleet, and the delegates at once assembled on the *Queen Charlotte* to decide the issue of the mutiny.

Admiral Gardner was on his ship, the *Royal Sovereign,* when the project was read. The two delegates of the ship, when they went off to the meeting, promised to send him word of the result. Gardner waited for a long time with increasing anxiety, and, finally, fearing that the delay implied fresh trouble, and believing that by personal influence he could prevail on the delegates to accept the project, went himself to the *Queen Charlotte,* taking with him Colpoys and Pole to support him in argument. The admirals found all the delegates on board except four—those from the *Royal George* and the *Queen Charlotte*—who had gone on shore, and by their absence had probably caused the delay. It seemed as if Gardner's errand would be thoroughly successful: indeed, he had found that the terms were entirely acceptable to the delegates, and he had gone so far as to draw up for them a letter of thanks to the Admiralty. But while he was actually writing this letter the meeting was invaded by the four delegates who had been missing.

There was no official leader of the mutiny, but these four men, delegates from the flagships of Howe and Bridport, seem to have had a predominant influence. On this occasion their authority was strong enough completely to overset Gardner's work of reconciliation. They insisted that nothing but a promise of pardon, signed by the King and confirmed with the royal seal, should induce the fleet to weigh anchor. They went below among the ship's company, saying that the Admirals had come to deceive them, and reminding them that the mutineers of the *Culloden* had been hanged in spite of the promise of pardon. In the delegates' meeting Joyce and Morrice, of the *Royal George,* refused to

take any further action until the King's pardon should be actually in their hands.[1] The other delegates and the ship's company were readily convinced by this specious argument, and the letter of thanks was left unsigned.

The blow was too great for Gardner's endurance. His anger blazed out at the insolence of the mutineers. It is said that he told the delegates they were "a damned, mutinous, blackguard set who deserved hanging";[2] and that he seized one of the refractory men by the collar and threatened to hang him, together with every fifth man in the fleet. In the moderate language of the Admiralty, Gardner "appears to have exerted himself as much as a man could do to counteract the false and mischievous insinuations of these men."[3]

His efforts and expletives so far exceeded the limit of discretion as to arouse a fierce outcry of resentment among the seamen. There was a tumult on deck. Delegates and crew surged round the Admiral, and heedless of the respect due to his rank they hustled him and his colleagues from the ship.[4]

1. Rough Minutes, u.s.; *Times*, 24 April.

2. *Belfast News Letter*, 21 April. Apparently he also repeated the taunt that they were "skulking fellows, knowing the French were ready for sea, and they afraid of meeting them" (*ibid.*). The accusation was unjust; the majority of the seamen were quite willing to fight against the French, and the fleet in Brest was by no means ready to sail.

3. A.S.M. 136.

4. The above account of the stormy interview is derived from several sources, in addition to the report in the Rough Minutes. Gardner wrote on the same day, merely that the terms offered by the Admiralty had had a good effect, but that the free pardon was still doubted (A.S.I. 107, J 220 a). His threat and the seizing of the delegate are mentioned in the Annual Register, and by Schomberg, and are accepted by Sir J. K. Laughton (*D.N.B.*, vol. xx, p. 430). Brenton adds that Gardner went to the forecastle and addressed the crew, slipping his head into the noose of the rope that dangled from the yard-arm, and offering to be hung if only the fleet would put to sea. Neale, as usual, gives a version of his own: he includes Earl Spencer among the admirals on board, and transfers the interview to the *Royal George*. In the account of the mutiny written by men of the *Queen Charlotte* it is said that Gardner's speech was answered by hissing, but there is no mention of violence. The incident is wrongly dated 22 April in this account. A rumour spread abroad that Gardner narrowly escaped assassination on the *Queen Charlotte*. The report found its way into the *Ann. Reg.* (p. 210), and the *Moniteur* (5 May: "L'amiral Gasner a été menacé d'être jeté à la

Gardner and Pole went ashore to report their ill-success. In the meantime the delegates dispersed to their ships, but they were soon summoned to a fresh meeting by the appearance of a red flag on the *Royal George*.[1] As a result of this meeting orders were given that the guns should be mounted and the fleet prepared for action. The committee evidently feared that their dispute with the Admirals would lead to hostilities. It is well that the guns were not brought into use, for if once the mutiny had turned into open rebellion, the minority of revolutionaries and violent men would have had the upper hand and the movement would have ended in disaster, both for the seamen and the nation.

Ever since 10 April Bridport's flag had been flying on the *Royal George*. But his officers felt that it was an insult that the symbol of authority should still preside over such a scene of mutiny and revolt; and on their own initiative they struck the Admiral's flag.[2] This action had a happy effect. The mutineers had no particular grievance against Bridport, and they were sorry to find themselves deprived of his nominal command. Next day (22nd), the delegates wrote him a conciliatory letter, asking him to resume his command, and referring

1. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 9) says that the sight of this flag, the usual signal for battle, caused great consternation among the officers, who expected "something dreadfully hostile."

2. It was sometimes said that the seamen struck Bridport's flag, and sometimes that Bridport himself gave the order to strike it (*Ann. Reg.*, p. 211; *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 417; *Clowes*, vol. iv, p. 169). Colpoys, who was present in the fleet at the time, draws particular attention to the fact that the officers were responsible. In the Admiralty Minutes it is said that the flag was struck by Captain Domett's order.

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mer pour avoir reproché aux matelots de craindre la rencontre des français.") The Dutch Comité des Relations Extérieures also understood "that the seamen had nearly thrown their admiral overboard" (Wolfe Tone, *Memoirs*, ii, 207). But the rumour was probably only an exaggerated version of the hasty departure of the admirals. If it is true that Gardner was so lacking in humour as to run his head through the noose of the yard-rope, this incident may have given the impression to some eye-witnesses that he was acting upon necessity rather than choice.

to him as "the father of the fleet."[1] Unfortunately the good effect of the friendly relations between Bridport and the mutineers was more than counterbalanced by the mischief caused by the admirals' visit to the *Queen Charlotte*. The mounting of the guns was an indication of a new spirit among the delegates. They resented, in the first place, any interference on the part of officers with whom they were not accustomed to deal, that is, of any others than their captains or the Commander-in-Chief. And they particularly disliked Gardner's appeal to the loyal men in the fleet to return to their duty without further parleying. His action was construed as an attempt "to sow division and mistrust in the fleet." It was regarded as a trick to induce the seamen to submit without any guarantee that their terms would be carried into effect, and in order to avoid such a trick, the delegates, whose suspicion was easily aroused, decided they would not submit until their terms were ratified by the royal pardon and an act of Parliament. In another letter to Bridport, written on 22 April, they gave notice of the change in their policy:—

> "But for the unfortunate cause above mentioned [Gardner's speech on the *Queen Charlotte*] there is every reason to believe that before this time every tittle of the business would have been settled; but at present it is the resolution of all not to lift anchor till every article is rendered into an Act of Parliament and the King's Pardon to all concerned."[2]

It was this feeling of suspicion, increased by the events of the next fortnight, which led to the second outbreak of mutiny at Spithead and St. Helens. And so it happened that Gardner's well-meant effort to impress the seamen with a sense of their misconduct and to bring them back to their duty was, in fact, one of the most disastrous incidents of the year.

1. *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, p. 211; Papers of the *Queen Charlotte*, A.S.I. 5125.
2. Bridport Papers, u.s., p. 136.

The change in the delegates' attitude is further shown in the temper of their last communication with the Admiralty. In the first place they expressed their thanks for the promise of an increase in the wages and provisions. They did not wish to risk the loss of these benefits by seeming ungrateful.

But they still refused to weigh anchor until the Admiralty had promised to increase the pensions; to stop the supply of flour in port, and to allow the supply of vegetables; and until the private grievances of the various ships were redressed. Finally they demanded the King's pardon and an act of Parliament. "And this," they added with some pride, "is the total and final answer." [1]

When this letter arrived in Portsmouth the Lords of the Admiralty were no longer there. The disastrous meeting on the *Queen Charlotte* had taken place on the 21st. When Gardner and Pole went ashore after the meeting they found the Board at dinner in Sir Charles Saxton's house. The Admirals reported that promises were useless in dealing with the suspicious seamen. Two letters, containing the fullest promises of pardon, had been sent by the Board to Gardner for his use on the *Queen Charlotte*, but the delegates had regarded the letters as snares to lead them into punishment.[2] Spencer realized that nothing less than a proclamation of pardon, signed by the King himself, and stamped with the great seal, would put an end to the mutiny, and he decided at once to go in person to the King and ask for a general amnesty. With this object the Lords of the Admiralty set off from Portsmouth soon after midnight, and they were already far on their journey when the letter of the

1. A copy of this letter was sent by Parker to Nepean on 22 April (A.S.I. 1022, A 369). Another copy was sent by Bridport (A.S.I. 107, J 224). It was shown to him by a printer who had been ordered to make copies of it for distribution in the fleet. It was probably drafted in the committee on the *Royal George*; for although it is dated 22 April, according to the papers of the *Queen Charlotte* it was written on the 21st.

2. The letters are given below in Appendix A, p. 372.

delegates was sent ashore. They reached London at 9 a.m. Spencer had little time to rest. At five o'clock in the afternoon he left London, in company with Pitt and the Lord Chancellor (Loughborough), and travelled to Windsor to hold a council with the King. The ministers arrived at nine o'clock.[1] The proclamation was immediately written out and signed. A hundred copies were printed, and sent in haste to Portsmouth. They were in Sir Peter Parker's hands by a quarter to seven on the following morning (Sunday, 23 April).[2] Parker immediately distributed copies to be read by the captains to their crews. The news was welcomed by the seamen. Bridport himself read the proclamation on the *Royal George*, and made a speech, in which he promised a general redress of grievances. The crew replied by cheering and pulling down the yard ropes—a sign that the authority of the officers was restored.[3]

The Admiral's flag was hoisted again, and he resumed command. Yet the satisfaction was not universal. There was still in the minds of some of the seamen a strong suspicion that the Lords of the Admiralty were cheating them, and that Parliament would refuse to ratify their terms. The fate of the *Culloden's* men was fresh in their memories. The very ease with which they had won their case was a suspicious circumstance. And a section of the seamen, who, for political reasons, had a direct interest in prolonging the mutiny, probably encouraged the feeling of distrust. Moreover in their reply to the "total and final answer" of the 22nd, the Board announced their inability to supply more fresh beef or vegetables while the ships were in port, or to raise the out-pensions of Greenwich Hospital. And they refused to entertain any irregular complaints against the officers.[4]

1. These particulars are taken from the *Times*, 11.s
2. Parker to Nepean, 23 April, A.S.I. 1022, A 376.
3. Bridport to Nepean, 23 April, A.S.I. 107, J 224. On the same day Parker wrote: "The ships' companies, by their repeated cheers, and taking down the yard-ropes, evince their return to their duty."
4. See Appendix A, p. 374.

The men of the *Queen Charlotte,* who had been throughout the prime movers and supporters of the mutiny, were determined that the advantage that had been won should not be lost by trickery. When Admiral Pole read the proclamation of pardon to them it was not received with cordial applause as it had been in most of the other ships. The delegates were summoned and they demanded the original draft of the proclamation. It was brought from the *Royal George,* and they were allowed to see for themselves the imprint of the King's seal. Then at length both delegates and crew were satisfied. They gave three cheers, and the yard-arms from which, for a week past, the threatening ropes had hung, were now manned with sailors in their uniform of blue and white.[1] So the mutiny ended,[2] and it remained with the Lords of the Admiralty to put into practice the promised revolution in naval administration.

There is little more to be said of this mutiny. Indeed, very little is known even of the events that happened in the fleet while the mutiny was in progress.[3] But the business of the fleet must have been carried on very much as usual, as there is no evidence to the contrary. To the common seaman the mutiny must have seemed a very tame affair. He kept his usual hours, did his customary work, and ate his ordinary rations. Many seamen may have resented the restrictions imposed by the wisdom of the delegates, for the transactions in which they had such a vital interest were carried on over their heads, and they had passively to await the result.

The delegates in drawing up the rules at their first

1. Papers of *Queen Charlotte,* A.S.I. 5125.

2. According to the *Times* (25 April) the mutiny did not actually end until six o'clock on the twenty-third. Probably the last yard-ropes were pulled down at that hour.

3. The Admirals' letters are few and short, because the lords of the Admiralty were at Portsmouth, and had their information by word of mouth. And the delegates deliberately prevented the seamen from publishing any news of the mutiny. It was doubtless good policy, but one would be grateful at the present time if some account of life in the fleet at one of the most interesting periods of its existence had been left on record.

meeting, on 16 April, had three main objects in view: to ensure the unanimity of the seamen; to maintain the discipline of the fleet; and to prevent the spread of wild and alarming rumours on shore. To secure the first object they gave orders that no ship should lift anchor until the whole dispute should be settled; that every crew should give three cheers each morning and evening; and they imposed the oath of fidelity—a very serious matter with the seamen—on all sailors and marines in the fleet.

Discipline, the second object, was very effectually enforced. The delegates gave orders that the officers should be obeyed in every particular, except putting to sea; that watches should be regularly kept; that there should be no "ship-visiting" until the end of the mutiny; and strict regulations were made against drunkenness, and the smuggling of liquor. One man at least had reason to know that the mutiny was not meant to be an occasion for license. He was a seaman of the *Pompée*, who brought a pint of spirits on board. For this offence he had twelve strokes of the cat, and was ducked three times in the sea.[1] The third object shows the wisdom of the delegates; for there were in the fleet many turbulent and downright disloyal men, whose hopes would be raised by the mutiny. Some of them would almost certainly make their expectations known, if they were allowed to do so, in letters to their friends on shore. These letters would undoubtedly fall into the hands of the Admiralty and would give them and the public a false impression of the mutiny. Thus the whole scheme of the ringleaders might be upset. To prevent such a calamity, the delegates refused to let any private letters go ashore; and it is significant that although

1. *Belfast News Letter*, 21 April. Perhaps it was this incident, together with the appearance of the yard-ropes, that gave rise to the rumour, which reached Wolfe Tone a few days later, that a man had been hanged for opposing the delegates (*Memoirs*, II, 207). The rumour is denied in the *Times*, 21 April. In the *Times*, 24 April, it is said that eight men of the *Minotaur* had been ducked three days before.

women might go on board, they were not allowed to return.[1]

Of the other party to the negotiation there is still less to be said. It has been shown already that the Lords of the Admiralty had no choice. They were forced to yield; and they cannot be blamed for yielding reluctantly and granting their favours piecemeal, for they naturally wanted to avoid lavish expenditure and to strike a good bargain. It is true that at first they tried without success to assert their authority, but when they learnt the real state of affairs they adopted a right attitude. The demands of the "refractory seamen" were reasonable, and the Admiralty and most of the officers recognized the fact. They must have felt some irritation and anxiety at the delay at a time when the French were preparing expeditions for the invasion of England or Ireland, but in their letters and minutes there is little trace of bitter or hostile feeling against the mutineers.

Finally, it may be asked, what was the opinion of the nation in regard to the mutiny? The answer is that the strength of the mutineers lay ultimately in the support of public opinion. If the whole nation had risen in indignation against them, as it rose a few weeks later against the seamen at the Nore, they would have had no alternative but open treason or submission. Instead, the journalists wrote cautiously, the public murmured aproval, and Parliament granted the increase in wages without hesitation.[2]

The outstanding feature of this mutiny—appreciated by the seamen themselves, by their officers and the Admiralty, by the Parliament and the nation as a whole—was its respectability.

1. Rules of the delegates, *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, p. 256.

2. See *Cunningham*, Introduction, p. x; pp. 101—104. *James*, vol. ii, 63: "The complaints of the Portsmouth mutineers having been, for the most part founded on justice, the sympathy of the nation went with them, and very few persons throughout the kingdom did or could grudge the additional allowances (many of them a mere exchange of the real for the nominal) which the British sailor, after a hard struggle, got permanently secured to him."

BOOK II.

The Second Mutiny at Spithead

CHAPTER IV.

Delay and Suspicion.

Everyone connected with the navy was able to breathe freely at last. The seamen were satisfied with the issue of their doubtful enterprise, the officers with their return to power, the Lords of the Admiralty with the passing of a dangerous crisis. Preparations for sailing were begun at once in the fleet, and indeed few preparations were necessary, for the ships were already well supplied with stores of every kind, and Bridport only awaited the order to weigh anchor. The crews of the *Marlborough*, *Minotaur*, *Ramillies* and *Nymphe* were still discontented because their officers were not to their mind.[1] These ships remained at Spithead, but on the 24th six others went to St. Helens, and on the next day orders were sent to Bridport to set sail, leaving the refractory crews behind, and to keep a station near the Lizard.[2] Accordingly the *Marlborough*, the *Minotaur* and the *Nymphe* were left under the command of Admiral Colpoys, with his flagship the *London*, and on the 28th the rest of the fleet moved down to St. Helens.[3] Only a week before the wind had been favourable, but now it was blowing so strongly from the west that Bridport found it impossible to put to sea. So day after day the ships rode idly at anchor, and the seamen waited, with growing impatience, to hear of the redress of their grievances.

While the fleet lay wind-bound the Lords of the Admiralty were honestly fulfilling their promises. On 22 April they sent a memorial to the Privy Council

1. A.S.I. 107, J 225, 226 (24 April); Bridport Papers, B.M. Add. MSS. 35,197, p. 124.

2. Orders and Instructions, 1797, p. 50 (A.S.O. 133).

3. Parker to Nepean, A.S.I. 1022, A 398. The *Minotaur* went to St. Helens on 30 April (*London Packet*, 1–3 May). I find no indication that the *Ramillies* stayed behind at all. The crews of these two ships were evidently satisfied, and agreed to put to sea with the rest of the fleet.

giving an account of the proposed increase of pay and provisions.[1] The Council appointed a committee to consider the proposals. At a meeting on 3 May the committee gave a favourable report, and orders were given for the preparation of estimates of the additional grant required from Parliament. On the next day the estimates were ready, and Pitt gave notice that he would lay them before the House of Commons on Friday, 5 May. But the House did not meet again until the following Monday. The question was then discussed in a committee of ways and means, and the required sum, £372,000, was voted. Thus there was an interval of fifteen days between the promise of the Admiralty made at Portsmouth, and the confirmation of the promise by the House of Commons.[2]

This interval had been used to great purpose in the House of Lords and in the Channel Fleet. On 3 May the Duke of Bedford, whose word had considerable influence because of his high rank and his prominence in the Whig party, rose in the House of Lords, and asked for information in regard to the transactions at Portsmouth; and as Spencer was not able to make any definite communication at that time, Bedford threatened to propose the production of papers connected with the mutiny. He certainly had no more sinister motive in asking the question than to discredit the ministry by insinuating that their treatment of the seamen would not stand the test of a public discussion, and to suggest to the mutineers that their real friends were to be found in the Opposition. Several peers[3] protested against a

1. Memorials and Reports, A.S.M. 343, p. 437.
2. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 505 *sqq.*
3. Howe, Grenville, the Duke of Clarence, and Sydney (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 474—477). Howe pointed out that a discussion would force the ministry either to express approval of transactions which they regretted, or to confess that they had been forced to grant terms which they now wished to repudiate. This dilemma really existed, and the ministry were most anxious to avoid it. But probably Howe's statement of it, and particularly the hint of thinking it "improper to confirm" the concessions, did nearly as much mischief as Bedford's speeches.

discussion of the mutiny at such a critical moment, when the discontent in the fleet was not wholly allayed, and the terms of agreement had not yet been ratified by Parliament, and on the motion of Grenville the House adjourned. The ministry were anxious that the mutiny should be forgotten as soon as possible. They knew that the measures of financial reform were about to come before the House of Commons, and they hoped that the whole difficulty would very soon be at an end, and that it would never be revived.

But Bedford's speech had done its work, and had undone the work of the Admiralty. A plain report of his question and of the discussion which followed it might well unsettle the minds of the seamen. Plain reports, however, were not all that came to arouse doubt and discontent in the fleet. Some newspaper writers seem to have misconstrued the debate as a suggestion that the government intended to cheat the seamen by refusing to ratify the promises of the Admiralty. And there are rumours that handbills were printed, announcing that the concessions would be, or had been, rejected by Parliament. All these papers have apparently been destroyed and we can only guess at their character. None of the Whig journals have any comments on the discussion in the House of Lords, and clearly none of their writers had any suspicion of the fresh discontent in the fleet, or made any effort to stir up discontent. And it is doubtful whether any files of the more revolutionary organs have been preserved.

Although there is no direct proof of the existence of the mischievous newspapers and handbills there is enough indirect evidence to show beyond doubt that such writings were issued, and were distributed in the fleet with the deliberate object of exciting a fresh mutiny. The authorities in Portsmouth were universally of opinion that people on shore had been tampering with the loyalty of the seamen. The *London Evening Post*

(11 May) reported that "some persons from London had been distributing handbills through the fleet, inflaming the minds of the seamen, and saying their Bill had been thrown out of the House of Lords." In the *True Briton* (9 May) it was said: "We yesterday learnt that the present ferment in the fleet arose from a gross misrepresentation of what passed a few days ago in Parliament, upon the subject of the late complaints of the seamen conveyed through the medium of a Jacobin Evening Newspaper, which got on board the fleet." Perhaps the "Jacobin Evening Newspaper" was the *London Courier*, which was mentioned by a Secret Committee of the House of Commons as having helped to foment the mutiny.[1]

Some further evidence of the work of incendiaries in the Channel fleet will be discussed in a later chapter, dealing with the political aspect of the mutinies. We may notice here one incident which shows how the mischievous documents were circulated among the ships at St. Helens. On 5 or 6 May a boat from the *Mars* came alongside the *Queen Charlotte*. The men in the boat threw in a bundle of newspapers through a lower-deck port-hole, and shouted that Parliament was going to refuse the promised redress.[2]

The false news was firmly believed. Those men in the fleet who for political reasons, or from sheer love of disorder, preferred mutiny to obedience—and perhaps others who honestly feared that "the seaman's cause"

1. *House of Commons Reports*, vol. x, p. 790. Some of the mutineers at the Nore wrote that the *Star* was the only newspaper which remained friendly to the seamen (A.S.M. 137, Papers of the *Inflexible*, No. 50). But there is very little in the *Star* itself to support this opinion. In common with nearly all the contemporary press it favoured the demands of the seamen at Spithead, but deplored the method of advancing them, and it consistently opposed the Nore Mutiny. On 29 May it spoke favourably of the conduct of the delegates, and this observation probably gave the mutineers the impression that the *Star* was their friend. As a matter of fact the *Morning Chronicle* was much better disposed towards them.

2. Papers of the *Queen Charlotte*, 6 May (A.S.I. 5125). This event probably happened on 5 May, as the dates given in these Papers are often one day in advance of the fact.

was in danger—were easily able to spread a general suspicion of the intentions of Parliament.

If only the fleet could have put to sea at once when the first mutiny ended, the seamen would have returned to find their grievances redressed, and their wages increased by a parliamentary grant. But as they waited at St. Helens without hearing another word of the promises made to them by the Admiralty, the doubt from which their minds were never quite free grew stronger. They did not understand how slow was the motion of the administrative machinery, and their credulous minds were easily worked upon to believe that they were being hoodwinked by the government.[1] Their suspicions were confirmed when they read in the newspapers that some of the most prominent men in England feared trickery as well. They had evidently expected that their grievances would be redressed immediately, but still their rate of wages remained the same, their measure of food was not increased, and the same unpopular officers still held sway.

At the beginning of May the Admiralty gave them further cause for alarm by a very ill-judged paper of instructions issued to the commander of the fleet. Naturally, the Lords of the Admiralty were anxious to avoid the necessity of another disagreeable visit to Portsmouth; but if they thought to make their position secure by mere repression, they were greatly mistaken. Perhaps they imagined that the eagerness of the mutineers for the royal pardon was a sign of weakness. The instructions suggest more clearly than any direct description can do the attitude of mind of the Admiralty, and they had unexpected importance in the earlier half

1. Throughout the mutinies the seamen showed an extraordinary readiness to believe any suggestion against the government. Their suspicion, however, was natural, and is not without its parallel in modern politics. Compare, for example, the remarks of Mr. Graham Wallas on the town labourer: "If as he grows up, he does not himself read, things beyond his direct observation are apt to be rather shadowy for him, and he is easily made suspicious of that which he does not understand" (*Human Nature in Politics*, p. 236).

of May. Officers were ordered strictly to enforce all existing regulations; to call frequent musters, and to read the Articles of War to the crews at least one a month. They were never to leave the ships for more than twenty-four hours without special leave from the commander of the squadron, and when on shore, in or near a port, they were to wear their uniform. They were instructed to share the provisions honestly with the ships' companies, instead of reserving—as officers frequently did—the best of everything for themselves. And in the same spirit surgeons were warned not to embezzle the drugs and medical comforts consigned to their care. The sailors were to be ranked carefully, according to their merits, in the three classes of able and ordinary seamen, and landsmen. All these clauses were subsidiary, and the first was rather vague. But two clauses with a more definite meaning were introduced: the arms and ammunition of marines were to be kept ready and in good order; and captains and commanders were to be prepared at any time to suppress the first semblance of mutiny.[1] "This unfortunate order"[2] was read to the seamen, and in conjunction with the exaggerated commentaries on the Duke of Bedford's speech, it helped to swell the tide of discontent.

Bridport had received a copy of the proposal for an increase of wages and provisions, which was sent by the Privy Council to be laid before Parliament. Directly he saw the mischievous newspapers of 4 May, he had the proposal published throughout the fleet, and he gave a full explanation of the delay.[3] But the seamen were not satisfied. They believed that their bill was "hove out," and once more they determined not to lift anchor

1. Orders of Admiralty to Commanders of the Fleet, May 1 (*Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 249). *Neale* (p. 400) pretends that these instructions were the answer of the Admiralty to the last message of the seamen.

2. Gardner used this phrase in a letter to Nepean, A.S.I. 107, J 268, 8 May.

3. J 254, 5 May.

until their grievances should be definitely redressed by an act of Parliament.

It appears that their suspicion had been aroused and that they were preparing for a renewal of the mutiny even before the arrival of the newspapers. There is good reason, as we have seen, for believing that some persons, who succeeded in hiding their identity, had been deliberately working on the credulity of the seamen in order to bring about a renewal of the mutiny. It was hardly likely therefore that when their fears were confirmed by newspapers and handbills, the seamen would accept Bridport's word in the absence of any parliamentary measure for their relief.

The first news of their intention to mutiny is contained in a remarkable letter which was received by Captain Hood, of the *Mars*, and sent by him to Bridport. It was written on 3 May by James White, a surgeon's mate of the *Mars*. Although the statements made in the letter may not all be true, it deserves to be quoted in full, for it throws considerable light on the condition of the fleet :

"On the 30th of April Samuel Nelson, seaman, watchmaker by Trade, was repairing the purser's watch. He asked me if I would be so kind as to admit him into my berth, it being a gold watch. He had no convenient place to do it. I told him he may do it. While he was repairing it he said to me, 'What a state the ship's company is in, Mr. White.' I said, 'What do you mean?' Nelson : 'Why, sir, I will assure you the ship's company is very dissatisfied.' 'For why are they dissatisfied?' Nelson : 'Because the ship's company say the Admiralty was trifling with them in regard to their allowance of victuals.' 'Why,' I said, 'Nelson, I thought everybody was satisfied.' 'Oh, dear sir,' he replied, 'not by any means.' He then said, 'Sir, if you will not say anything, I will tell you something which will surprise you.' I told him let it be what it will I would not trouble my head with it. 'Why then, sir,' said he, 'the ship's company has agreed that if the Admiralty has not comply'd with everything they proposed before they go to sea, they are determined to take the ship into Brest.' 'Why, Nelson, is there any man

in the ship can take the ship into Brest?' 'Oh, dear sir,' he replied, 'many of the forecastle men can.' 'Why, Nelson,' said I, 'in what manner would they take the ship into Brest?' He said, 'Under French colours. And you may depend upon it, sir, it is not our ship in particular, but the fleet.' I said to him, was every ship the same way of thinking. He said yes, for nothing was transacted on board any ship but the others knew. On the 2nd May I was going to the sick berth, which is under the forecastle. I heard a great number say if they should not man the yards to-night they would to-morrow morning at eight o'clock.

James White." [1]

This letter seems to be a faithful report of an actual conversation, and it reproduces with curious accuracy the eagerness of the gossiping seaman to share his important secret, and the simple cunning of the surgeon's mate in promising not to 'trouble his head' with information that he intended to pass on to his superior officers. Nelson must have been an alarmist, for certainly the seamen in the fleet as a whole had no intention of taking their ships to Brest. He had probably heard the suggestion made by revolutionary persons in the forecastle of the *Mars*, and had believed their confident statement that the whole fleet would go with them. Graham, the magistrate who was sent from London to examine the causes of the mutiny, wrote a week later: "There is not a man in the fleet whose attachment to the King need be doubted, or who would not rejoice in an opportunity of meeting and fighting the enemy." [2] He was too sanguine, but his opinion was nearer the truth than Nelson's. The later mutiny in the *Pompée* showed that some men in the fleet wanted to go to Brest, but at least a working majority held to their allegiance.

It soon became clear that the general wish of the seamen was to remain at anchor until the promises of the Admiralty should be confirmed by an act of Parlia-

1. A.S.I. 107, J 252.
2. A.S.I. 4172. Graham to King, 11 May.

ment. But if they had any serious intention of deserting to the enemy they would not have been so careful for the redress of their grievances, because after their desertion the grievances would not affect them any longer. It may be assumed therefore that Nelson's statement was a great exaggeration, and Bridport probably did not regard it very seriously. Nevertheless the rumour must have been very disquieting to him. He learnt the actual intention of the seamen two or three days later from a note written on the *Queen Charlotte* on 5 May:—

> "This is the sole agreement of the fleet, that our matters is not fulfilled. We are still to a man on our lawful cause as formal (*sic*). We have come to an understanding of Parliament, finding there is no likelihood of redress to our former grievance. Therefore we think it prudent to obtain the same liberty as before. So untill our matters are comply'd with we are determined not to go to sea.
>
> P.S. There is *Marlborough* and *Nymphe* in a wretched condition. If admiral Bridport does not comply with these measures and forward them, we will take the speediest methods." [1]

This letter is one of a large bundle sent to the Admiralty by Bridport on 7 May. Most of the letters are reports from the captains, but among them are two other notes from ships' companies that deserve notice. The first

1. A.S.I. 107, J 262. Mr. Hannay (*Saturday Review*, 13 June, 1891, and *Naval History*, vol. ii, p. 366) says that the second mutiny originated on the *Duke*; that the crew arrested Captain Holloway on 5 or 6 May and threatened to hang or flog him if he did not produce the order of 1 May. This incident is reported in the *London Packet* and the *Star*, 10 May. The newspaper reports add that on a second thought the crew decided to duck the Captain, but that in the end the Master persuaded them to be content with sending him ashore. But I find no record of such an incident in the letters either of Bridport or of Holloway (see Holloway's letter of 7 May below, p. 94 n.), and I suspect that the story is only one of many unsubstantiated rumours that found their way into the newspapers. Letters from Portsmouth published at the time show that people on shore were in a state of panic, and were ready to believe the wildest stories about the conduct and intentions of the seamen. The note from White of the *Mars* seems to give the first news of discontent, and the note from the *Queen Charlotte* the first suggestion of another mutiny at Spithead. The crew of the *Pompée* were evidently active in planning the mutiny, and they took the lead in the actual outbreak.

from the *Pompée* to the *Royal George* (written apparently on 6 May) contains the following passage:—

> "Our opinion is that there [is] not the least reliance to be placed in their promises, which, sorry I am to say like, our oath of fidelity is broke if we do not remain unshakned until the whole is sanctioned by an act of Parliament. Now, brothers, your steady friends the *Pompées* beg of you to give them a final answer, and whatever may be your proposals, we one and all will never deviate from being determined to sink or swim."

The second is from the *Ramillies* to the *Royal George*:

> "They mean to lull us into a supposed state of security relative to their good intentions towards us by granting us a temporary increase of provisions, etc., which 'tis true they have already done, with no other view than to keep us in the dark as to their intentions respecting the main point in view. If they once divide us and get us upon different stations, be assured they think they can then make their own terms. They know we are no politicians, but at the same time our late proceedings have convinced them that we are not entirely bereft of rationality. We all know that without an Act ratified by Lords and Commons, the promises of the Lords Commissioners of Admiralty are of no avail. Why, then, delay the passing of such an Act, and endeavour to amuse us with needless procrastinations and subterfuges?
>
> *P.S.* We are well assured that the Seamen's Bill is hove out, particularly meeting the disapprobation of Earl Spencer, etc. We have this from good authority. If you receive this letter and approve of it, let a pair of white trousers be hung from the sprit-sail yard arm as the signal of approbation."

On 5 and 6 May a new mutiny was organized—probably by the old methods of ship visiting and letters. The development of the mutiny will never be exactly traced, for most of the arrangements must have been made verbally. There can be no doubt that practically all the seamen in the fleet believed that they had been betrayed by the Admiralty. The conviction was certainly strengthened by the reports of the discussion in the House of Lords, and by the Order of 1 May. The

question whether the suspicion was stimulated by political intrigue must be answered in a later chapter. At all events, the seamen did not understand that their bill was simply undergoing slow and inevitable processes of manufacture, and that the original draft would have to pass through several fresh stages before it could become law. They expected an act of Parliament made to order within a few days, and when, after an interval of a fortnight, there was still no sign of an act, they decided that their previous effort had not been successful, and that they must try the effect of another and a more forcible mutiny.

The first symptom of trouble which drew the attention of the officers was a murmuring and excitement among the crew of the *Royal George* on 6 May, the result of reading the letter from the *Pompée*.[1] Admiral Pole, who had moved his flag to the *Royal George*, addressed the crew and persuaded them to remain quiet. He probably regarded the disturbance as a dying flicker of the last mutiny. If he did think so, he was soon undeceived.

1. The letter quoted above.

CHAPTER V.

The Mutiny on the "London."

The blow fell suddenly on Sunday, 7 May, in the morning. Until the outbreak actually happened everything was apparently working smoothly. Only a few people in authority had any suspicion of the trouble that was being prepared. Thomas Grenville wrote a few days later: "By the post of Saturday the letters from the fleet were better than they had ever been; and the officers themselves seemed in much better heart and spirits."[1] The wind had at last veered round to the east, and Bridport intended to make the signal for sailing.[2] But the fleet was so distracted by the ill-will of the seamen, that he dreaded the result, and refrained from giving the order.[3] At nine o'clock in the morning the crews of most of the ships crowded forward and gave three cheers. The yard-ropes, which had become a symbol of mutiny, were hung up again. Some men of the *Pompée* set out in a boat, and began a tour of the fleet. Each ship sent its delegates in a boat to join them. One or two crews were reluctant to embark on a fresh mutiny, but they were coerced by the others, and before noon every ship at St. Helens had contributed its boat

1. *Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 379, T. Grenville to Buckingham, 9 May.

2. On 1 May Sir John Warren, who was cruising in the Western part of the Channel, reported eighteen ships of the line and six or seven frigates at Brest, most of them with sails bent and ready to put to sea. Bridport received the news on 3 May, and it probably decided him to make the signal as soon as the opposing wind abated (A.S.I. 107, J 248). Reports of this kind were fairly common; *e.g.*, on 9 May the Duc d'Auvergne sent intelligence of sixteen ships of the line and twelve frigates in Brest harbour ready for sea. As a matter of fact the fleets in Brest and the Texel were by no means prepared for sailing.

3. Bridport to Nepean, 7 May: "I intended to have made the signal for the fleet to weigh this morning, as the wind was easterly; but I am compelled to remain here unless the vote of supply in the House of Commons for the increase of the seamen's pay and provisions should arrive, and give the crews of the fleet satisfaction" (A.S.I. 107, J 262).

and delegates, and all the officers were deprived of their command.

The plan must have been carefully laid, but as the delegates were already elected, the rules ready made, and every one in the fleet was used to the business, it was a comparatively simple matter to start a fresh mutiny.[1] Most of the officers yielded as readily as they had done three weeks before. Some of them tried to argue their crews back to obedience, some, as vainly, called the marines to arms, and Captain Lock, of the *Queen Charlotte*, tried to send away the boat that came from the *Pompée*. But they all saw that resistance was useless and gave way without fighting. They must have been overwhelmed with a feeling of helplessness at this new outbreak, and indeed their commander openly confessed to such a feeling. He wrote on the same day to the Admiralty:—

> "I have endeavoured to prevent this mischief by every argument in my power, but without effect; and I cannot command the fleet, as all authority is taken from me. . . . . My mind is too deeply wounded by all these proceedings, and I am so unwell that I can scarcely hold my pen to write these sentiments of distress." [2]

But there was one officer who determined to resist the mutiny, and in resisting it nearly lost his life. About noon, when every ship at St. Helens had contributed its boat and its delegates, the whole procession set out for Spithead, with the intention of bringing the ships that were stationed there to St. Helens, so that the mutinous fleet might be more compact and formidable. The *Marlborough* and the *Nymphe* were still at Spithead, and Admiral Colpoys remained there in the *London* to watch them.[3] These ships had been joined by the *Monarch*

1. It seems likely, however, that a separate committee, probably of twelve members, was elected on each ship at this time (see above, p. 22, n. 1).

2. A.S.I. 107, J 262.

3. Probably they were in a line—the *Marlborough* furthest to the west, the *Nymphe* on the east, and the *London* keeping guard between the two. Colpoys said in a letter that the *Marlborough* was to the west of the *London*.

and some frigates and small vessels. The boats went first to the *Marlborough*, at one o'clock. Captain Nicholls allowed the delegates to come on board, and they addressed the crew, telling them to dismiss the officers against whom they had grievances, and to take the ship to St. Helens. Then they rowed to the *London*.

From the quarter-deck of that ship the boats had been seen during the morning rowing to and fro at St. Helens. After the morning service, Captain Griffith had read the Articles of War,[1] possibly by a mere coincidence.[2] But more probably he was acting on instructions just received from the Admiralty. On the previous day a fresh order to captains for the preservation of discipline had been sent to Portsmouth. Sir Peter Parker received it on the seventh, the day of the outbreak, and communicated it to the captains and commanders at Spithead. It is reasonable to suppose that this fresh warning from the Admiralty led Colpoys to oppose the outbreak of mutiny to the utmost of his ability.[3] At one o'clock Griffith came to the Admiral, who was in his cabin, with these ominous words: "Sir, I am very sorry to acquaint you that everything appears as wrong as ever with the fleet lying at St. Helens, where the boats are assembling and the yard-ropes reeved as formerly."[4] Colpoys deter-

1. See Papers of *Queen Charlotte*. Captain Griffith, who was the Admiral's nephew, adopted later the name of Colpoys. After the publication of Brenton's History, he wrote an account of this incident (*Letter to Sir T. Byam Martin*).

2. According to the Admiralty Regulations they had to be read on every ship once a month, and this regulation had been emphasized in the Order of 1 May.

3. Parker to Nepean, 7 May, A.S.I. 1023, A 423. The officers at St. Helens were already deprived of their command before the order could reach them.

4. A.S.I. 107, J 269. This account of the struggle on the *London* is based almost entirely on the letters of Colpoys (to Nepean, J 269, 273, 282; to Bridport, J 267; and Bridport Papers, u.s., pp. 158-159; to Parker, A 424), with the additions given by his nephew in the Letter to Sir T. B. Martin (in which three of Colpoys's letters to Nepean are reprinted). Most published accounts of this incident that I have read are inaccurate, except the short notice given by *James* (vol. ii, pp. 38, 39). Some of the errors are pointed out in the following notes.

mined to use every effort that his own ship's company at all events might have neither cause nor opportunity to mutiny. All hands were ordered aft and he cross-questioned them from the quarter-deck. He asked whether they knew what was happening at St. Helens; and they all said that they did not. They must have known indeed that a fresh mutiny had begun there, but in all probability they were not parties to it, for they had been separated from the rest of the fleet.

"Well then," Colpoys continued, "let me know if you have any grievances remaining."

"No, none," the crew answered.

"Have you not had everything granted, nay more than you expected, by the Admiralty?"

"Yes, yes."

"That being the case, I now pledge myself, if you will follow my advice, that you shall not get into any disgrace with your brethren in the fleet, as I shall become responsible for your conduct."

Colpoys then sent all the seamen below, with orders to draw in the lower-deck guns, and close down the lids of the port-holes.[1] The officers and marines were armed, and stationed in various places about the upper decks.[2] So, isolated and prepared for forcible resistance, the *London's* company awaited the arrival of the delegates.

In the meantime, the sailors below were forming their plans. They had joined heartily in the last mutiny; and now, when their fellow-seamen called on them to rise again in revolt, they did not intend to be found wanting. Some of them profited by the interval and the general disorder to imbibe rum to excess, and when the crisis came "many of them seemed very much intoxicated, which had not been the case in any former part of the mutiny."[3]

1. His object was evidently to prevent the crew from communicating with the delegates through the port-holes, as the men of the *Queen Charlotte* had done.

2. This was strictly in accordance with the Orders of 1 May (see above, p. 52).

3. J 269.

As the boats drew up to the *Marlborough* the excitement on the *London* grew very strong, and the seamen, against the Admiral's orders, "began to make a stir and showed a disposition for coming up." The officers who were standing at the hatchways held them back. But the seamen were equal to the occasion. They dragged in the middle-deck guns, and pointed them up the hatchways. The officers called to Colpoys, asking whether they should fire, and he answered, "Yes, certainly; they must not be allowed to come up until I order them." There was a rush up the hatchways; some of the officers fired, and some of the men fired back. The marines, who had given Colpoys to understand that they would support him, began to throw down their arms and join the seamen. Only two of them—both foreigners—remained loyal, and they were taken off to the quarter-deck by the officers.[1] When Colpoys saw that the marines were deserting, he realized that more resistance would simply lead to useless waste of lives, and that the officers must soon be overpowered. He ordered them to cease firing and retire to the quarter-deck, and he called to the seamen to come aft. They were now crowding on deck. Some of them ran towards the quarter-deck crying, "Blood for blood," and, seizing muskets, levelled them at the officers; but others, whose judgement was sounder, with "creditable forbearance" prevented them from firing.[2]

The first lieutenant, Peter Bover, had been conspicuous in the struggle at the hatchways, and apparently had mortally wounded one of the delegates on the *London*.[3] He was seized and dragged to the forecastle in the middle of a great crowd of angry seamen. A yard rope was reeved, and already the noose was round Bover's neck, when Smith, the ship's surgeon, who was very

1. *Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*, p. 32.
2. *Ibid.*
3. It is certain that one of the wounded seamen was a delegate, for John Fleming was appointed the next day in this man's place. See below, p. 65.

popular with the crew, persuaded the mob to wait, and to allow the Admiral a chance of speaking to them. The delegates from the other ships arrived, after the firing had stopped; they boarded the *London* without encountering any resistance and joined the noisy company at the forecastle.

Colpoys, when he was allowed to speak, said that he was responsible for all that the officers had done, and that Bover, in firing, was carrying out instructions. And he added that he himself was only doing his duty; for he was bound to resist any attempt to mutiny, particularly at that time, since he had "received very recent instructions and orders from their Lordships for the conduct of officers towards the men."[1] Thus far the mutineers had listened quietly to Colpoys, but "they one and all caught at the word 'orders,'" and demanded the document from the Admiral. With some difficulty Colpoys got permission to go to his cabin, under escort, to find the orders. He purposely spent a long time in searching for his keys, so that the mutineers might have an opportunity to return to their senses. While he was below, the mob at the forecastle was discussing the fate of Lieutenant Bover. It was well that the delegates were aboard, for most of them were men of good judgement. Many of the crew evidently wanted to lynch the lieutenant; but others took his part. It is said that a top man called Bover "a brave boy,"[2] and Valentine Joyce, one of the leading delegates, who had served under Bover on another ship, interfered in his behalf. In the end it was decided that Colpoys, Griffith and Bover should be taken below and confined in different cabins. When Colpoys returned to the forecastle he was met with black looks, which gave him, as he said, little hope for himself; but he was relieved to find that Bover was set free from

1. These words may refer to the Orders of 1 May, but they seem rather to suggest the orders that Parker had received that morning.
2. *Hannay*, vol. ii, p. 368.

the yard-rope. He read the orders, and the delegates took possession of them for further discussion. So the incident came to an end. The three officers were taken to their cabins, and the delegates returned to St. Helens.

Several men on both sides had been wounded in the fighting at the hatchways; but the actual number of casualties cannot be known with certainty. Probably the following is a complete list : on the side of the officers, Lieutenant Simms, of the marines; Simpson, a mate; a midshipman; a private of marines; and a seaman [1] were wounded; and of the other party, four sailors were wounded when they were forcing open the hatchways. Next day it was reported from Haslar that three of the seamen had died, and that Lieutenant Simms, the midshipman and the marine were doing well.[2]

Colpoys had acted throughout with great courage and firmness.[3] His chief concern was for the safety of Bover,

1. Colpoys mentions a seaman among those of his supporters who were wounded. But there is no other record of any seaman taking the part of the officers.

2. Yeo, of Haslar Hospital, to Parker, A.S.I. 1023, A 426. The following table shows how conflicting are the different accounts of the incident :—

	Casualties :	
Authority.	Side of officers.	Side of mutineers.
Colpoys (to Bridport)	Lieut. Simms of marines, Simpson mate, 1 marine, 1 seaman (wounded)	4 seamen—killed
Colpoys (to Parker)	Lieut. Simms, Sympson mate, 1 marine, and "another" (wounded)	4 men in the between-decks (wounded)
Schomberg		5 seamen—killed by the marines
Brenton	Lieut. Simms	2 seamen—killed
Clowes	Lieut. of marines (wounded)	5 seamen—killed
Political History	Midshipman and officer (wounded)	1 seaman—killed
Hannay		1 seaman—killed

3. "To the interposition of Providence operating in the calmness and confidence of the Admiral, surrounded by his officers, meeting their assailants face to face, is to be ascribed their preservation." E. G. Colpoys, *Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*, p. 33.

of whom he had a very high opinion.[1] His own life was in grave danger; but he felt that he had only done his duty in carrying out strictly the orders of the Admiralty, and he awaited the result with a peaceful mind.[2]

All the next day (8 May) the fate of the three imprisoned officers hung in the balance. Their ship was brought down with several others from Spithead to St. Helens, and it was anchored about a mile away from the rest of the fleet. The delegates took it upon themselves to pronounce a verdict on the case of Bover. Happily, Valentine Joyce was his friend, and he found another champion in John Fleming, the newly-elected delegate of the *London*. In choosing this sober and pacific man as their representative, the crew of the *London* showed clearly that they regretted their violence of the previous day. Fleming wrote a remarkable letter to the delegates in which he paid a high tribute to Bover's character, and gave the strongest assurances that his ship's company would not allow the lieutenant to receive any further injury.[3] In the evening Bover was set at liberty by order of the delegates. Colpoys and his nephew did not escape so easily. Some of their crew were still for hanging them, and throughout the day and night they were kept imprisoned.[4] But on the morning of the 9th their long suspense was ended. On the previous day the House of Commons had unanimously granted the money required by the Admiralty, and a copy of their resolution was brought by a messenger to Portsmouth during the night. Sir Peter Parker received it in the morning, and sent it immediately to Bridport. The weather was very stormy, and it was impossible for Bridport's boat to go alongside most of the ships; but fortunately the *London* was in a sheltered

1. "I have seldom, if ever, met with a more promising young officer." Colpoys to Bridport, J 273.
2. "I feel very much resigned to any consequences which are to follow." Colpoys to Sir P. Parker, A 424.
3. See Appendix A, p. 376.
4. J 273.

position, and the copy of the vote was taken aboard. The crew received it with great satisfaction, and they promised to send Colpoys and Griffith ashore uninjured, and to return to their duty as soon as the King's pardon should be announced.[1] The three officers, together with the Rev. Samuel Cole, chaplain of the *London*, were put ashore the next day.

At the inquest on the seaman who had died in Haslar Hospital, the jury showed their approval of the officers' conduct by finding a verdict of "justifiable homicide."

1. A.S.I. 1022, A 428.

2. *Times*, 13 May, J 282, A 436. Colpoys retired from his command directly after the mutiny. On 4 June he was in Tunbridge Wells (he wrote a letter on that date, asking for arrears of pay, A.S.I. 579.) In 1805 he was made the Treasurer of Greenwich Hospital (*Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*, p. 41). Spencer and Nepean both sent him letters in which they spoke with the greatest approval of his conduct on the *London* (*ibid.*). A conditional order for Colpoys to strike his flag was sent on 14 May (A.S.O. 1352, p. 84; see also *Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*, p. 30).

It may be worth while to point out some inaccuracies in the chief published accounts of the fighting on the *London*, in addition to the almost inevitable mistakes in reporting the casualties. Mr. Hannay's account is accurate in most particulars; but he says that some of the crew refused to go below, a statement that is not found in the original letters, and that the crew mutinied at the instance of the delegates, whereas the delegates were not on board when the disturbance began. This statement, however, which appeared in the *Saturday Review*, is corrected in the *Naval History*, vol. ii, p. 367. The *Times* (10 May) represents the marines of the *London* as firing into the boats of the delegates.

Brenton (vol. i, p. 418) makes several mistakes. He says that a delegate shot Lieutenant Simms, whereas the delegates were not on board during the fighting. And he gives the name of the wounded lieutenant as Lyons. According to Captain Griffith, Brenton's description of Bover's conduct is quite wrong. He says that all the officers and marines were imprisoned. The chief object of Griffith (Sir E. G. Colpoys) in writing his letter to Sir T. B. Martin was to correct Brenton's mistakes. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 19) makes Lieutenant Bover give the order to fire, and says that the marines obeyed the order. This mistake was copied, probably from Schomberg, by Brenton.

Clowes (vol. iv, p. 171) says that the marines helped in resisting the delegates; and he follows Brenton in saying that the marines were imprisoned.

CHAPTER VI.

The Mutiny at St. Helens.

We must turn back now to the day of the outbreak (7 May) and trace the less thrilling events on the other ships of Bridport's squadron. When the delegates had boarded the *Marlborough* and the *London*, they visited the *Monarch*, a ship of the line which was stationed at Portsmouth,[1] and several frigates that lay near at hand. They ordered the crews of these vessels to send ashore any officers against whom they had grievances, and to repair to St. Helens.[2] The object of the delegates was to concentrate the fleet, for a compact body of men is likely to be more manageable and unanimous, and better able to offer resistance, than a scattered multitude; and at St. Helens the fleet was at a safe distance from the guns of Portsmouth, but still near enough to land for the purpose of negotiation. The mutineers had reason to avoid Portsmouth town, for General Crosbie, the military commander of the port, had made great preparations in case the mutiny should change into rebellion. He had nearly ten thousand men ready for action;[3] the garrison was prepared for a siege, with drawbridges taken up and guns pointed; and reinforcements were even sent to "the old, crazy castle of Southsea." In the

1. On 18 April Parker mentioned that the *Monarch* was at Spithead (A.S.I. 1022, A 357).

2. Parker to Nepean 7 May (A.S.I. 1023, A 424. Enclosures from Colpoys, Cooke, of the *Nymphe*, and Nicholls of the *Marlborough*). It would seem that they also demanded delegates from the ships at Spithead, and that they afterwards regretted the measure (see below, p. 73). The letter from the *Eurydice's* crew to their captain is signed by two men who were apparently delegates.

3. Two thousand at Portsmouth, 3,000 at Hilsea, 2,000 at Gosport, 1,000 at Portsea, and another 1,000 at Farnham; in addition to seven companies of volunteers. See *Belfast News Letter*, 8 May, 1797.

actual course of events these measures were not necessary, but they might have been useful if the seamen had tried to effect a forcible landing. On the 8th several of the ships from Spithead moved down to St. Helens.[1] The captive officers went on board the *London*, but the chief officers of some of the other ships had been sent on shore according to the instructions of the delegates. In some cases no one higher in authority than the captain of the forecastle was left to manage the navigation, and in consequence there were narrow escapes from shipwreck, for the weather was very rough, and the water at the mouth of St. Helens harbour is shallow.[2]

The dismissal of officers was a new device. It had several advantages for the mutineers. In the first place, they were left in sole command of the ships without danger of interference or resistance on the part of the officers; again, they had real grounds of complaint against many of the officers, and the grievances *ipso facto* disappeared when the authors of them went. And the mutineers were placed in a stronger position for bargaining. They could refuse to admit any officers on board until they had assurance of the act of Parliament and the King's pardon. The process of dismissal began on the seventh, and continued for several days. Sir Peter Parker was besieged with doleful letters from captains who had thus been marooned on their native shore. Captain Campbell, of the *Terrible*, was turned off with little respect for his rank[3] or his office, together with all the quarter-deck officers except a midshipman.[4]

1. A.S.I. 107, J 267. Parker names nine ships that went to St. Helens on this day: *London, Marlborough, Nymphe, Monarch, Virginie, Melpomene, Santa Margarita, Hind, Eurydice* (A.S.I. 1023, A 426).

2. *Times*, 10 May. There are sandbanks off St. Helens. This fact was known to the French, and Wolfe Tone proposed to sink ships on the banks in order to block the entrance of the harbour.

3. He was the brother of Lord Cawdor. In 1801, when he was the captain of the *Téméraire*, Campbell had another experience of mutiny. But on that occasion he was able to subdue the outbreak by means of bold speech and stern action.

4. A.S.I. 107, J 272; 1023, A 426.

On Sunday evening, after the struggle on the *London*, the crew of the *Mars* were suspicious that their officers too might make some resistance, particularly when they found that one of the lieutenants had loaded pistols in his cabin. They kept Captain Hood and four of his lieutenants imprisoned all night with sentinels to watch them, and in the morning sent them ashore, and the chaplain and a midshipman with them.[1] The captain and six officers of the *Hind*, a frigate stationed at Spithead, were hurried on shore before the ship, under command of the master, went down to St. Helens. Bazeley, the captain, received a curt and anonymous note which gave him no encouragement to stay at his post :

"Gentlemen, it is the request of the ship's company that you leave the ship precisely att eight o'clock . . . As it is unanimously agreed that you should leave the ship we would wish you to leave it peaceable or desperate methods will be taken." Here again are clear traces of the effect produced on the minds of the seamen by the resistance of Admiral Colpoys. Bazeley and his fellow-sufferers gave way, "fearing otherwise his Majesty's ship might be lost."[2]

The crew of the *Glory* did not even allow their officers the slight courtesy of a warning. They suddenly removed them all, including a lieutenant who had only been on board two days.

But several crews behaved more respectfully. Many officers, against whom the men had no particular grievance, were told that they would be allowed to return

1. A.S.I. 107, J 272; 1023, A 426. In view of the alarming rumours reported by White (see above, p. 53) it is not remarkable that the officers of the *Mars* should make warlike preparations.

2. *Ibid.* The *Marlborough's* company sent a similar note to Captain Nicholls : "Sir, this is to inform you that it is the desire of the ship's company that one hour after the receipt of this paper, you, Lieutenants Carr and Richards, the Surgeon and his mate, Mr. Orchard, and the Captain of Marines, leave the ship, and it is the desire of the fleet that we unmoor and join the fleet at St. Helens."

when the mutiny came to an end.[1] Captain Talbot of the *Eurydice* frigate was very popular with the crew; but the delegates at the time of their visit to Spithead ordered the *Eurydice* to join the fleet at St. Helens. Talbot was told by his men that if they disobeyed the order the *Marlborough* would open fire on them; and as his orders from the Admiral were to remain at Spithead, he left the ship. The crew were honestly sorry that he had to go, and treated him with the utmost respect. The *Eurydice* duly went to St. Helens with the other ships and frigates. But the delegates decided that the mutiny should be carried on by the ships of the line alone, and the frigates and smaller vessels were sent back to Spithead.[2] On their return, the crew of the *Eurydice* sent a cordial letter to Talbot, and persuaded him to take command again. The tone of the letter is shown in this passage :—

> " Captain Talbot, with the same cheerfulness that we joined in promoting the general good, so we now join in our earnest wishes and desires that you will once more join the flock of which you are the tender shepherd. We wish by this to show you, Sir, that we are men that loves the present cause as men ought to, yet we are not eleveated that degree to neglect our duty to our country or our obedience to you, and as the line of battle ships means to settle the business, the command of the ship belongs to you, sir, which command we, the ship's

1. In a note to Captain Holloway, the crew of the *Duke* said that they wished "that the undermentioned persons quit the ship upon receipt of this never to return, excepted the persons with a mark against their names, who is to return when everything is settled to the satisfaction of the fleet" (*ibid.*). It is an indication of the strain that was put upon the officers at this time that Holloway's efforts and misfortunes brought on an attack of an old chest trouble (A.S.I. 107, J 272).

2. The first mutiny had been confined to the larger ships of Bridport's squadron, and the men who formed the inner ring of the mutineers belonged to these ships. They would not welcome any interference from outside; and there was a danger that the inclusion of the ships that were forced to join the mutiny might mar the unanimity that was necessary for success—as it did afterwards at the Nore. Probably the wholesale removal of ships from Spithead was a hasty measure which was reversed when the delegates were able to take counsel at leisure.

company, resign with all due honour, respect and submission hopeing you will always continue to do as you have heretofore done, to hear a man's cause as well as an officer's." [1]

On 7 and 8 May the harbour was busy with boats coming to the shore with their cargoes of dispirited officers. From admiral [2] to boatswain, whether roughly treated or respectfully, whether sent with honour in a captain's barge or dismissed without warning into a ship's boat, all the officers who opposed, or were likely to oppose the wishes of the seamen were sent ashore: some for a few days only; many with no hope but to make such terms as they could with the Lords of the Admiralty. At least a hundred officers were expelled, and they came from at least eighteen different ships.

Those officers who remained were deprived of all authority, and the seamen enjoyed unwonted freedom for a short time. They were able to row from one ship to another or to go ashore, whenever they were off duty, without any other hindrance than the roughness of the weather.

Some took their ease on the beach at Southsea: others, perhaps more wealthy, tasted, in the public houses of Portsmouth and Gosport, the undiluted liquors from which the rules of the naval service had estranged them. No one on shore had orders to oppose their landing; the inhabitants were friendly; and the sailors came and went unmolested.

1. A.S.I. 1023, A 434, apparently 10 May, but no date is given. The letter, that it might be more acceptable, was written very carefully in copy-book fashion, on pencilled lines.

2. Gardner was sent ashore from the *Royal Sovereign* on 8 May. Bridport and Pole remained on board the *Royal George*.

CHAPTER VII.

Lord Howe's Visit and the "Seamen's Bill."

While the mutiny was thus peacefully going forward, the "seamen's bill" was passing quickly through the necessary stages in Parliament. It will be remembered that the vote which was so urgently needed was delayed, partly through the slowness of parliamentary procedure and partly through sheer misfortune, until 8 May. On that day Pitt moved in a committee of supply that £372,000 should be granted to defray the cost of the proposed increase of wages and victualling for the remainder of the year.[1] The resolution was passed unanimously, though not without some discussion on the part of the leading members of the opposition—a discussion provoked, perhaps, by Pitt's request for a silent vote. Rumours of the fresh outbreak at St. Helens had reached London during the day, and the urgent need for the vote was appreciated in Parliament. A messenger was sent at once to Portsmouth with a copy of the resolution. He arrived at ten o'clock on the morning of the 9th. Sir Peter Parker sent a lieutenant to St. Helens to publish the all-important news through the fleet. But the weather was so rough that the lieutenant was only able to visit two ships,[2] and, as the gale increased in violence, the rest of the fleet remained isolated and mutinous all day and all the following night.

1. *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxiii, 477—483. A note on the estimates is given at the end of this book.

2. See above, p. 65. Cf. Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 9 May: "A messenger was dispatched last night with the news of the vote of the House of Commons having passed unanimously; but it is doubtful whether in this high wind he could get to the fleet" (*Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 380).

On that stormy day a bill, based on the resolution passed in committee, was brought before the House of Commons. It passed without opposition through all its stages,[1] and was sent up to the Lords, who had delayed their adjournment in order to deal with it. In the Upper House there was only a short debate on the second reading, and the bill was passed unanimously.[2] The Royal assent was given, and the printers at once prepared copies for distribution in the fleet.

Thirty copies of the act were taken to Bridport on the 10th,[3] and with them came the news that Lord Howe the idol of the Channel fleet, and the King's personal friend,[4] was about to start for Portsmouth. Whether the idea originated with George III or with Pitt, it was a most happy inspiration. The King and Howe were the only two men in authority whom the sailors really trusted; and when Howe came to them with full power from the crown to treat with them, and to grant the royal pardon at his discretion, bringing with him moreover the desired act of Parliament, the mutineers felt that at last their negotiation was based on solid rock, and that they were no longer at the mercy of deceitful men.

Howe's popularity was well deserved. Although at times he could be stern and exacting, yet ever since the Seven Years' War, when as Captain of the *Magnanime* he won the title of the "sailor's friend" by granting leave of absence to all his crew, watch by watch,[5] he had never failed to show kindness to the seamen under his

1. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 483—489.

2. *Ibid.*, 489—493.

3. A.S.I. 107, J 278.

4. The members of the House of Hanover were always very friendly with the Howes. *Barrow* (p. 2) suggests that the intimacy began with the marriage of Lord Howe's great uncle Emanuel to Ruperta, a daughter of Prince Rupert. Howe's maternal grandfather, Baron Kielmansegge, had been Master of the Horse to George I in Hanover, and this fact may have cemented the alliance.

5. *Barrow*, p. 61

command.[1] His mediation was the one thing needed to bring the mutiny quietly and happily to an end.

He set out from London on 10 May accompanied by his wife, and he arrived at Sir William Pitt's house in Portsmouth early on the 11th.[2] In spite of his gout and his seventy-one years, he began his business at once. By noon he was at St. Helens, on board the *Royal George;*[3] and on the same day he visited the *Queen Charlotte,* his old flagship, and the *Duke,* and talked to the delegates of some other ships.[4] He spoke in a conciliatory way, as became his character; and the olive branch was more acceptable to the mutinous seamen than it had been to the rebellious Americans. Howe's procedure was to tell the mutineers that the government had all the time intended to grant them everything promised by the Admiralty, and that as they knew, the act for the increase of their wages and provisions had already been passed before he left London. He impressed them with a due sense of their misconduct in renewing the mutiny through idle suspicion; and when they had expressed their regret and contrition, he read a fresh

1. *Mason* (pp. 83, 84), quoting from an article in the *British Magazine,* says that it had been Howe's practice "to go below after an action, and talk to every wounded man, sitting by the side of their cradles, and constantly ordering his live-stock and wines to be applied to their use at the discretion of the surgeon, and at all times for the sick on board." Howe's kindness and courage, together with the memory of his great victory of 1794, gave him a moral authority over the seamen which belonged to no other admirals of the time, except perhaps St. Vincent, Duncan and Nelson.

2. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 20) says that Howe arrived on the 14th; and this curious mistake has been copied by *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 419), *Mason* (Life of Howe, p. 85), *Clowes* (vol. iv, p. 171) and other writers. The right date is given by *Hannay* in the *Political History* (vol. x. p. 392) and by *Neale,* p. 117. But even the cautious *James* has fallen into the trap (vol. ii, p. 39). Sir Byam Martin tells a curious and in some points unlikely story of Sir William Pitt; that he had once been a midshipman in the navy, but deserted, and after some time entered the army, where he rose to a high position. The improbable part of the story is that he refused to apply for a regular discharge from the navy,—and so remove the reproach of having run—until he was a General in the army (*Letters of Sir T. B. Mortin,* vol. iii, pp. xix, 305–307).

3. A.S.I. 107, J 280. His interview on the *Royal George* lasted three hours. *Times,* 15 May.

4. A.S.I. 579 (Admirals Unemployed), 12 May.

proclamation of royal pardon.[1] For four days he continued this treatment, and contrived in that time to visit every one of the mutinous ships. He made the concession, to which the Lords of the Admiralty had not stooped, of recognizing the delegates as spokesmen of the fleet. On the thirteenth he met them on Sir Peter Parker's flagship,[2] the *Royal William*, which had remained loyal throughout the two mutinies;[3] and he and Parker had another interview with them the next day. At all these meetings, both with the crews and with the delegates, Howe's speeches made a favourable impression—his presence alone must have had a considerable effect in subduing the mutiny. But his course was not altogether smooth. The seamen, though they trusted Howe himself, were most suspicious of the government. They were still convinced that the Admiralty and the ministers had made a covenant to deceive them; that "if all this defraud had not been found out, it might have created more of a dreadful consequence"; and they were determined that they would no longer be "amused or diverted by fair promises."[4] A writer in the *Times* said with truth that they still thought more of the speeches of Fox and Sheridan than they did of the Act of Parliament.[5] Howe himself found it so difficult to disabuse their minds that he concluded that some people in the fleet must have set themselves deliberately to foil his work of reconciliation.[6]

1. Howe to Portland, 16 May (A.S.I. 4172); reprinted by Barrow (p. 341).

2. A.S.I. 1023, A 444; *Times*, 15 May.

3. On the 7th, when the delegates came to Spithead, about a hundred supernumeraries from the *Royal William* had gone to St. Helens and joined the mutiny. In the *Times* (12 May) it is said that these men were all landsmen, newly raised; but Parker wrote that most of them were seamen, belonging to ships that were at sea (8 May, A.S.I. 1023, A 426). The whole of the *Royal William's* crew seems, however, to have been quite obedient. On 10 June they gave Parker an address expressing their loyalty (*ibid.*, A 546).

4. Papers of *Queen Charlotte*, A.S.I. 5125.

5. *Times*, 12 May, 1797.

6, "There appear to be some watchful agents, not yet to be traced, who neglect no opportunity to start fresh difficulties for obstructing the desired accommodation." Howe to Nepean, 13 May (A.S.I. 579).

At length his popularity and his assurances took effect, and he managed to persuade the seamen that their grievances really were redressed, so far as Acts of Parliament and Admiralty instructions could redress them.

But still the mutineers were not satisfied. They insisted that the officers against whom the ships' companies had individual complaints should not be allowed to return. It was an extraordinary demand, and a very important principle was involved in it. If the Lords of the Admiralty complied, they would be tacitly admitting that they had allowed a too harsh administration of the Articles of War; and their compliance would be an earnest that discipline should be more lenient in future. They would be setting up a strange precedent, too, in dismissing, at the instance of common seamen, officers whose appointment they had themselves approved.

But however unhappy the circumstances might be, the Board were forced to agree to the dismissal of these officers. Howe found that it was the only means of bringing about a peaceful settlement. The seamen refused to serve under officers who had not treated them fairly; the officers themselves had no wish to be foisted on crews which would not obey them; and Howe "judged fit to acquiesce in what was now the mutual desire of both officers and seamen in that fleet."[1]

About half the officers who had been sent ashore were allowed to return to their ships.[2] Many were invited by their crews to return. The most notable was Admiral Gardner. He went back to the *Royal Sovereign* with a very bad grace; disappointed because he had not been allowed leave of absence to recruit his health,[3] and grumbling because the "cursed yard-ropes" were still hanging in defiance of his authority.[4] The disposal of

1. Howe to Portland, 16 May (A.S.I. 4172).
2. On 11 May Parker reported that many had already returned (A.S.I. 1023, A 436).
3. Gardner to Nepean (A.S.I. 107, J 174).
4. Bridport to Nepean (A.S.I. 107, J 293).

the officers was finally arranged when Howe met the delegates on 13 May. Written complaints were sent to Howe from all the crews that had grievances against the officers, and these complaints served as the basis of the negotiations.[1] The delegates particularly asked that none of the officers should be court-martialled on account of the charges made against them.[2] It was enough for the seamen that the offending officers should be removed; and the consideration may also have weighed with some of them that in a court-martial the cross-questioning for the defence might disclose some inconvenient evidence in regard to the antecedents of the mutinies.

The difficulties were largely settled on the 13th; but another meeting, at which Parker was present, was held on the next day.[3] The object of this meeting seems to have been to draw up a kind of treaty, embodying the terms on which the seamen were willing to return to duty. The treaty was to be printed for circulation in the fleet.[4] Howe wanted to pronounce the King's pardon at this interview, as soon as the negotiations were done, and the delegates had promised that in future they would only apply for reforms in a legal way; but the copies of the royal proclamation of pardon did not arrive until six o'clock in the evening, and the closing ceremony had to be delayed until the next day.

The wording of the proclamation had caused some trouble. Howe first received a draft on the 12th, and read it to the mutineers. They were not satisfied with it. There were one or two ambiguous phrases which, in

1. These documents are now bound with the letters from the Secretary of State (A.S.I. 4172). They were enclosed with King's letter to Nepean, 31 May. Extracts from some of them are given below in Book V.

2. Howe to Portland, u.s

3. In the *Times* (15 May) it is said that Parker, Capt. Pickmore and a secretary were also present at the former interview on the *Royal William*; but Parker himself only says that he attended the second meeting. (A.S.I. 1023, A 444).

4. This is on the authority of the *Times* (16 May). The document, if it ever was printed, would be most useful at the present time; but apparently no copy of it has been preserved.

their opinion, would allow the Admiralty to punish the ringleaders, and still to observe the letter of the proclamation. They objected to the word "promise"—it would seem that they had an invincible distrust of all officers' promises, even such as were confirmed with the royal seal,—and strangely enough they preferred the phrase, "meaning further to extend our most gracious pardon," to the more definite statement, "we do hereby promise our most gracious pardon."[1] Howe had good reason to complain of "the so much too easy facility of working upon the unsuspecting minds of the well-disposed seamen,"[2] for although they used such absurd caution in dealing with official persons, they were ready to believe any insinuation against the honesty of the government which might be made by private individuals.

A fresh and final difficulty arose on 13 May, when Sir Roger Curtis arrived at Spithead with eight ships, all in a state of mutiny.[3] Howe visited them and easily persuaded the seamen to join with the rest in returning to duty, and receiving the King's pardon.[4] But they, too, were not satisfied until many of their officers had been removed. The mutiny must have been a godsend to a large number of officers who had previously been living on half-pay. The total number of officers dis-

1. Howe to Nepean, 12 and 13 May, A.S.I. 579. It may not be too fanciful to trace in these legal quibbles the influence of Evans, the "pettyfogging attorney." He was a man of great ability, but he had been disqualified for malpractices, and had entered the navy, under an assumed name, as a common seaman. When the mutiny broke out he was made a delegate. A correspondent of the *Times*, who was said to have first-hand knowledge of the mutiny, wrote that it had been engineered by Evans and Valentine Joyce (*Times*, 12 May). "Mr. Thomas King, of London," warned Nepean of Evans's ability and "abandoned principles" (*Admty. Digest*, 1797, Pro. K 50, 8 May); and J. Moore, of the East India Company, went so far as to say that Evans was "the instigator of the St. Helens mutiny."

2. Howe to Nepean 12 May.

3. A.S.I. 107, J 296; Howe to Nepean 14 May, A.S.I. 579. This squadron had contracted the contagion of mutiny from the fleet at Plymouth. Schomberg (vol. iii, p. 20) gives a wrong date—15 May—for the arrival of Curtis.

4. Howe to Portland 16 May, A.S.I. 4172.

missed from their ships in the two squadrons was a hundred and fourteen—forty-nine from St. Helens and Spithead, and sixty-five from Curtis's ships.[1] Although several of them were probably transferred to other ships, there must have been a considerable number of vacancies to be filled by men who were on the half-pay list. During the last few days of the mutiny Parker and Bridport were kept very busy with the selection of new officers.[2]

With their appointment the last occasion for mutiny was removed, and the old admiral's last service was at an end. But although he was quite exhausted with his efforts [3] Howe was characteristically unwilling to resign his charge without a final act of reconciliation. Accordingly the whole of 15 May was devoted to feasting and processions. In the early morning a large number of boats came to the Sally Port, and the townspeople were roused by the reiterated airs of "God Save the King" and "Rule Britannia," played by the massed bands of the fleets. After breakfast the delegates returned with Howe and Lady Howe, Sir William and Lady Pitt, and

1. Several officers were allowed or persuaded to return to their ships. The number of officers who retired from their commands in the various ships is given by Howe in a letter to Bridport (A.S.I. 4172, 14 May) :—

Bridport's Squadron: *Duke* 9, *Glory* 5, *London* 9, *Defence* 4, *Defiance* 2, *Marlborough* 5, *Monarch* 3, *Terrible* 2, *Pompée* 5, *Ramillies* 1, *Nymphe* 3, *Jason* 1.

Curtis's Squadron: *Prince* 16, *Formidable* 1, *Cæsar* 10, *Juste* 19, *Hector* 6, *Ganges* 3, *Russell* 8, *Thames* 2.

Four from Bridport's Squadron and nine from Curtis's were marines. It is a curious fact that one able seaman was sent ashore from Curtis's squadron: he may have been a strong opponent of the mutiny. The officers who were dismissed from Bridport's ships included Admiral Colpoys and four captains: Griffith (*London*), Nicholls, (*Marlborough*), Campbell (*Terrible*), Cook (*Nymphe*).

2. A.S.I. 1023, A 440, 454 (Parker to Nepean).

3. In a letter to Nepean (14 May, A.S.I. 579) Howe mentions that he was half asleep when he wrote his draft of the proclamation. And he adds: "I have only to complain of my infirmities, as they admitted not of that activity which the nature of the service required." And in another note he wrote, in his usual kindly manner, that he had been "much tired . . . with his daily employment there, and the wearying attention to the various discussions he was engaged in, to quiet the most suspicious but most generous minds he thought he ever met with in the same class of men" (*ibid.*, 14 May, enclo.).

a party of officers: and the whole morning was spent in a tour of the fleet.

It happened that four seamen from the Nore fleet—which had broken into mutiny three days before—arrived in Portsmouth on this morning, in time to witness the closing ceremony. One of these four delegates was called upon to give evidence after the end of the Nore mutiny, and in his evidence he described the scene on Bridport's flagship, the *Royal George*. He and his companions reached Portsmouth at the time when Howe and the whole party of seamen were on shore. They were met by Valentine Joyce, who took them with him in the procession to Spithead and brought them on board the *Royal George*. There they saw Lord Howe on the quarter-deck, and the whole ship's company assembled to hear him. He read to them the proclamation of pardon which had arrived on the previous evening, and holding up the document so that everyone could see it, he displayed the royal seal, the one token that was still needed to remove the doubts of the seamen. The crew answered with three cheers. They pulled down the yard-ropes, ran up the royal standard in place of the red flag, and returned to their regular duty. Their example was immediately followed by the rest of the fleet.[1] In the afternoon Howe visited Curtis's squadron at Spithead, and he returned to Portsmouth in the evening. The military, who had been collected to oppose an attack from the mutineers, were called out, to spend their ammunition in royal salutes and *feux de joi*. When at length the boats returned to Portsmouth, Howe was too tired to walk, and he was carried on the shoulders of the delegates to Sir William Pitt's house. There the success of these pioneers of naval reform was crowned

1. Evidence of Atkinson, Captain of the Forecastle of the *Sandwich*, A.S.I. 3685 (Solicitor's Letters). Atkinson said that Howe read the Act of Parliament, but he must have meant the King's pardon. The seamen had seen the Act before: it was the pardon that was new. For a further account of the mission of Atkinson and the other delegates from the Nore see below, p. 131.

with an ample dinner; and they returned to their ships happy and perhaps loyal, ready at least to obey when the order should be given to weigh anchor.[1] Howe may have acted unwisely in allowing this celebration. But on the whole it probably did more good than harm. It must have promoted a friendly feeling between the seamen and the officers, and apparently it did not have the effect of encouraging the seamen in the Channel fleet to mutiny again: practically all the later troubles in the fleet had a political origin. And the gentle treatment of the mutineers at Spithead did not influence the outbreak at the Nore; for the Nore fleet had already been in a state of mutiny for three days when this celebration took place.[2]

During the whole of Howe's visit to Portsmouth, Bridport had been remarkably quiet. The two admirals had been at enmity for several years, and Bridport naturally did not welcome the interference of his old chief.[3] When it was determined that Howe should be sent to Portsmouth, Pitt, Addington and Spencer all sent careful and conciliatory letters to Bridport, explaining that the decision had been made "under circumstances more distressing than the present," but that it could not be revoked, as the seamen had been told that Howe was coming. And it was pointed out that Howe would simply act as a private individual on whom special

1. A full account of the ceremony is given in the *Times* (17 May).

2. Possibly, however, Howe's visit to Portsmouth encouraged the ringleaders at the Nore to continue their mutiny, in the hope that their enterprise might end in the same fortunate manner. Nothing would have been more to their mind than a personal interview with Howe, a procession, and a feast at the Commissioner's house in Sheerness. (See below, p. 136.)

3. See *Barrow* (pp. 415–417). Howe thought that the feud began when he was First Lord of the Admiralty (Decr. 1783—July 1788), because he demanded a sum due to Greenwich Hospital which Bridport had in his hands. It was sealed by Bridport's neglect to answer several official letters written to him by Howe after the battle of 1 June. There must have been some essential want of harmony in their characters that made it impossible for them to work together. In 1795 Howe wrote to Sir Roger Curtis: "Should it be necessary for me again to resume the command at sea, I shall be compelled to declare my total inability to serve again with him."

powers had been conferred *ad hoc*, and would not appear "in a professional character." [1] Bridport received the news without grumbling; but it was noticed even in London that he held aloof from the negotiations, and was very uncommunicative.[2] And, with some reason, he resented the delay caused by the convivialities of the fifteenth. He was already under orders to sail, but on that day he received a second order to repair to Brest.[3] He complained, therefore, that Howe had put him in a difficult position by detaining three or four hundred men at a time when they ought to have been preparing for sea.[4] He had made a similar complaint before, and Spencer had to explain to him that the repetition of the order was not meant to express disapproval, but only to show the strong desire of the Admiralty to have the Grand Fleet at sea.[5]

On the sixteenth Bridport was free to make the final preparations, and early in the next morning the fleet at length set sail, after a delay of more than a month.[6]

The mutinies at Spithead had been preceded by troubles on individual ships, and they were followed by similar troubles. The discontent was not immediately allayed throughout the Channel fleet by Howe's visit and the Act of Parliament. But these later disturbances

1. Bridport Papers, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 35,192. I quote from Addington's letter. Pitt's letter, which is next to Addington's in this volume of the Bridport Papers, is quoted at length by Dr. Holland Rose (*William Pitt and the Great War*, p. 313).

2. Thomas Grenville wrote to his brother, the Marquis of Buckingham: "Not a word from Bridport, except to acknowledge the communication of the Act of Parliament" (*Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 381).

3. Secret Orders (A.S.O. 1352, pp. 86–88), 15 May. Bridport to sail as soon as possible to Brest. If the French fleet escaped from the harbour he was to follow them to Ireland.

4. Bridport to Nepean, 16 May, A.S.I. 107, J 304.

5. Bridport Papers, u.s., p. 183.

6. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 21) gives 15 May as the date of sailing. *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 420) and *Clowes* (vol. iv, p. 172) have copied the mistake. There is no doubt about the real date. Bridport wrote on 18 May (A.S.I. 107, J 311) that he set sail against a southerly wind and in thick weather, at 6.0 a.m. on the 17th: and the statement is confirmed by Parker (A.S.I. 1023, A 457). The right date is given in the *Moniteur*, 25 May.

were of so little importance that it is enough merely to illustrate the fact of their existence by mentioning those that were reported by Parker in the first few weeks after the mutinies. When Bridport's squadron had sailed, some of the crews remaining at Spithead ventured to prefer their own grievances and to dismiss their officers. Complaints were sent to Parker from the *Cumberland*[1] and the *Amphitrite*.[2] Officers had been sent ashore from the *Stag*.[3] The crew of the *Triumph* grew turbulent, and several officers came ashore. The captain, Sir Erasmus Gower, asked to be discharged, but the crew repented at once and petitioned the officers to return.[4] The crew of the *Stag* followed suit, and although some of the officers were permanently discharged the seamen asked that they should not be punished.[5] The *Intrepid* had been ordered to convoy a fleet of Indiamen. But many of the crew had been at sea for several years, either in the *Intrepid* or in other ships, and Howe had promised that they should have leave of absence. The promise had not been fulfilled, and they refused, not without reason, to unmoor until they had spent two days on shore.[6] However, they were persuaded not to keep their convoy waiting; and the captain, in reporting their decision to sail, said, "I do not know that I ever felt more pleasure in my life."[7] Probably the sailors benefited both financially and morally by remaining on board. A *chasse marée*, *Duke of Clarence*, would not go to sea before the crew had been paid.[8] A single seaman of the *Flora* was court-martialled for mutinous conduct.[9]

1. A.S.I. 1022, A 469, 20 May.
2. A 463.
3. A 486, 24 May.
4. A 485, 486. Gower did not return. He was appointed to the command of the *Neptune* in Long Reach.
5. A 538, 7 June.
6. A 503, 28 May.
7. A 508, 29 May.
8. A 535, 6 June.
9. A 586. 24 June; A 594, 25 June.

There was no principle involved in these events. In every case the grievance was either the misconduct of officers, or arrears of pay, or else too long service without leave of absence. It is quite possible that they were real grievances which ought to be remedied, but if the mutinies had not made the Admiralty easy of approach, no complaint would have been heard. A more serious mutiny, however, occurred on one of Bridport's ships. On 16 June the *Pompée* returned to Portsmouth. Two days before it had been discovered that more than eighty of her crew had conspired together to run the ship into Brest harbour, and desert to the French. Six of the ringleaders were now brought home to be court-martialled and about eighty others were discharged from the ship.[1] Here is a clear case of sedition. It suggests that the more violent party among the seamen merely feigned satisfaction with Lord Howe's proposals, and yielded because they saw that it was expedient to do so. The alleged grounds of discontent were removed, and the majority of the mutineers were satisfied. Public opinion would not support them if they made fresh demands from the Admiralty. A continuance of the mutiny would be open rebellion; and the guns of Brest would be less dangerous to rebels than the guns of Portsmouth. Thus it was in every way to the interest of the *Pompée's* crew to wait until they were near the coast of France.

The movers of mutiny in the Channel fleet concealed their methods and their identity so carefully that it is impossible to say how many men remained disaffected, or what further plans of mutiny or desertion were being canvassed. But the following letter, which can hardly be an entire fabrication, shows that some even of the delegates who had agreed to the terms proposed by Lord Howe were still refractory at heart, for all their outward loyalty and obedience. The letter is anonymous, and for this reason it is the more likely to be trustworthy:

1. A. 566, 16 June, and A 594, 25 June.

the author at least was not inventing a story for the sake of the reward [1] :—

> " Sir, One of the dilagates of the fleet told me that there would allways be a private corryspondence carried on between them by letters all though it was all settled with them . . . for it was agreed upon at there Commity . . . there is one Watkings of the *Defence* a dilagate . . . Joyce of the *Royal George* . . . will have all chief of the business in there persestion at there arival . . . I hope your honour will excuse me for not mentioning my name as I live at Portsmouth and they would kell me. I thought it my duty to mention the bove to you.
>
> I remain Honours verry hbl. servt.
> thou unknowd." [2]

If there was any serious intention of renewing the disorder in the Channel fleet, the plan was never put into practice. Any hope that may have been entertained of further success must have been crushed by the failure of the Nore mutiny.

1. Unless there was a secret understanding between the Home Office and the writer. But this supposition is very unlikely. Intelligence from secret agents was either signed with the writer's name or left unsigned. Moreover this letter has not in the least degree the character of a letter from a professional spy.

2. A.S.I. 3974 (Intelligence), p. 261.

CHAPTER VIII.

Who was responsible for the Mutiny?

There remains to be asked, and in some measure answered, one question connected with this mutiny: Who was to blame for the second outbreak? Were the seamen themselves at fault, or the Lords of the Admiralty, or the government?

It may safely be allowed that most of the seamen in the Channel fleet were persuaded, before they mutinied a second time, that their first mutiny had not achieved its object; that they imagined a conspiracy of lords of the Admiralty and ministers and privy councillors to have been formed against them to frustrate the promised reforms. What grounds had they for such a belief? There is no doubt that some people had deliberately worked to spread distrust of the government among the seamen, and that the second mutiny was to some extent the result of their intrigues.[1] On the other hand the seamen were not left in ignorance of all the measures of the government on their behalf. They might have known, though the circumstance might not impress them very deeply, that on 26 April, in the debate on the budget, Pitt had said that the question of the increased grant to the navy "would become the subject of a specific discussion upon an early day."[2] But they had more definite information, which ought to have satisfied them if they had allowed themselves to think seriously. It will be remembered that on 3 May the Duke of Bedford had asked whether Lord Spencer had any instructions to bring the question of the mutiny before the House; and that Spencer had been obliged, as a matter of form, to answer that he had no such instructions.[3] When the

1. This subject is discussed in Chapter VI.
2. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 428.
3. See above, p. 48.

newspapers, containing misleading comments on Spencer's answer, reached the fleet, Bridport did his best to remove the bad and false impressions that they made on the minds of the seamen. He published a full explanation of the delay in bringing the reforms before Parliament: and he caused copies of the promised resolution of the House of Commons to be circulated through the fleet.[1] Some blame must attach to the seamen as a whole for allowing themselves to be persuaded, in spite of these official assurances to the contrary, that the promises of the Admiralty were only made to be repudiated by Parliament.

The Lords of the Admiralty were also to blame for issuing the Orders of 1 May. Their motives are easy to understand. In the first place, they were determined not to be taken by surprise again, but to see to it that the officers should suppress every sign of disaffection before it should have time to spread through the fleet. And further, when they were back in London and had time for careful thought it seemed to them that the troubles at Spithead had been due in part to slackness of discipline. Their feeling was clearly expressed in a letter from Spencer to Bridport, written on the day before the second outbreak:—

> "We have had a very severe lesson in this business, and I trust that all officers in the fleet will feel the effect of it. A relaxation of discipline will sooner or later produce mischief, and the only way to avoid that in part, will, I am fully persuaded, be by a steady and invariable adherence to the strictest rules of the service. It has ever been my desire to make the service as agreeable as possible to all those engaged in it, and I may perhaps have been misled by this principle in some degree to give a little more indulgence than could in strictness be justified." [2]

There was, in fact, some ground for this belief; for in the Nore mutiny it was noticed that the disaffection was

1. A.S.I. 107, J 254. This happened on 5 May. Pitt had given notice the day before that he was going to move the resolution.
2. Bridport Papers, pp. 155–157, 6 May.

the worst in the ships in which the discipline had been the mildest. Nevertheless the policy was mistaken. The Order could not be enforced. The events of the next few weeks showed clearly that if the seamen and the marines all agreed to rise in revolt, no authority could prevent them. And even if it had been possible to enforce discipline, the Admiralty would not have been acting handsomely in following conciliation with this hostile measure, particularly at a time when the promised reforms had not been carried into effect. It is true that a few weeks later Sir Richard King issued instructions in Plymouth very similar to those of the first of May without any evil consequences. But at that time the circumstances were different; for all the terms of the seamen had been fully granted and ratified, and any further disorder could only be the work of a few unruly men, whose punishment would be approved by the rest of the seamen. The Order of the Admiralty, on the other hand, gave the seamen some ground for believing that the authorities on shore wished to repudiate their contract and to suppress by force every sign of discontent.

When Spencer heard the news of the second mutiny, and saw that coercion was impossible, he acknowledged his mistake, and explained it in his next letter to Bridport:—

> "In a business of this kind, when every moment may produce a change of circumstances, it is impossible for a person at any distance to adapt his expressions in such a manner to the circumstances of each moment, as not to make them very liable to be, on their arrival, very much misplaced." [1]

On the day on which he received this letter Bridport sent a note to Pitt, in which he expressed with candour his opinion of the policy of the Admiralty. His opinion was justified; indeed it was the only view that could be

1. Spencer to Bridport, 10 May, Bridport Papers, u.s.

held by a man in his position, confronted with the rebellious fleet, and entirely unable to command it. He said: "I have always considered peevish words and hasty orders detrimental, and it has been my study not to utter the one or issue the other. I wish that rule had guided the conduct [of] those in higher situations as I think it wiser to soothe than irritate disturbed and agitated minds." [1]

Although the Lords of the Admiralty were at fault, we should notice that other prominent people on shore supported their action. Thomas Grenville, for instance, in a private letter, referred to the instructions as "very proper." [2] But the judgement of history must agree with Bridport's opinion, and with that of Sir Alan Gardner, who described the order as "unfortunate"—as strong a term of reproach as a man in his position could use with propriety.[3]

It has been the custom of historians who have written accounts of the mutinies to blame the ministry for the delay in ratifying the promises of the Admiralty. Undoubtedly there was a delay. Although the memorial from the Admiralty to the Privy Council was sent on the 23 April, it was not presented, apparently, until the 27th.[4] Even then it was delayed for almost another week, and did not pass the Council until 3 May, "which," as Spencer wrote, "was the earliest day it could, as the forms required it to be referred to a Committee of the Council before it could be ratified." [5] Estimates were ordered by the Council on 3 May, and they were ready on the next day. But, by mischance, as we have seen, they were not submitted to Parliament for a vote of supply until the 8th.[6]

1. Bridport to Pitt, 11 May, *ibid.* This letter is an answer to the letter from Pitt which is quoted by Dr. Holland Rose, in *William Pitt and the Great War* (p. 313).
2. *Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 379.
3. See above, p. 52.
4. Bridport Papers, u.s., pp. 143–146.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
6. See above, p. 48.

If Pitt had realized the urgency of the business, he might have hurried the memorial through the Privy Council; he might have ascertained almost at once the amount of the grant that was needed; and before the end of April the resolution might at least have passed the House of Commons. If he had been gifted with his father's intuition he would perhaps have seen the importance of an immediate vote of supply and he might have prevented even the first mutiny by complying with the petitions of the seamen.[1] But if any apology is needed for Pitt's conduct at this time, there is the very strong excuse that he was suffering from serious private troubles,—financial difficulties, and the breaking of his friendship with Eleanor Eden. Moreover he interfered very little with the affairs of the Admiralty, so that the responsibility fell rather on the Lords of the Admiralty than on the ministers.[2] Indeed if Pitt was at all at fault, the blame must be shared by many other persons; for the fact is that nobody—neither Admiralty, nor Ministry, nor Opposition, nor newspaper-writers—had any expectation that fresh trouble was impending in the fleet.

Both Fox and the Duke of Bedford asked questions in Parliament in regard to the first mutiny.[3] On 1 May Fox mentioned that "considerable time had elapsed and no communication had been made," and Pitt's answer, "that in the course of a day or two a sum of money would be proposed to be voted by Parliament," probably led to Bedford's unfortunate interference two days later. But neither Bedford nor Fox had any suspicion of a

1. Dr. Holland Rose supports this opinion (*William Pitt and the Great War*, p. 320). But we may well doubt whether even Chatham would have realized in time that there was a dangerous flaw in the naval administration.

2. It is true that Sir Byam Martin said of Pitt: "I believe he was the only Prime Minister who understood the details and working of the navy, or even visited the Navy Office" (*Letters of Sir T. B. Martin*, vol. i, p. xiii). But certainly Pitt was not so closely in touch with the Admiralty as he was with the other departments of state.

3. *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 510.

fresh outbreak. If they had had any such idea they would certainly have made it known to the Ministry, and would not have made speeches that were so well calculated to stir up discontent in the fleet. Obviously their motive in asking for information was simply to provoke a discussion which would benefit their party and discredit the government.

The ministry had little reason to anticipate the second mutiny, and it would be unjust to blame them because they had not the gift of prophecy.[1] Moreover, if the Act had been passed at an earlier date, the authors of the disturbances might still have found other pretexts for renewing the mutiny.[2] In all probability historians would have found no fault with the government if the Whigs had not set the example by making the second mutiny an occasion for moving a vote of censure.

If any blame is to be assigned for the delay of the Act, it must rest with the Lords of the Admiralty for their lack of judgement, because they had information which was not known to other people. They knew that the seamen in the "total and final answer" of 22 April had given warning that they would not put to sea until the act was passed. And this warning was confirmed by a letter from a captain in Plymouth saying that the crews which had mutinied there "would return to their duty and wait the event of three or four days, by which time they had no doubt of having that confirmation they wished for,"—that is the Act of Parliament.[3] And Sir John Orde added a note which ought to have aroused

1. Cf. Pitt's defence in the debate on the vote of censure: "The question before the House was, whether there were grounds to believe that government ought to have been possessed of the opinion, that unless they had used considerable dispatch, those consequences which had since happened would have been produced" (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 405).

2. This argument was used by Dundas: "Was the right hon. gentleman (Fox) certain that the same diabolical tongues would not have invented some other story calculated to promote the confusion which they desired?" (*ibid.*, 515).

3. Captain Squire to Sir John Orde, 27 April, enclosed with Orde's letter, B 305, A.S.I. 311.

the authorities to great haste. He said that Captain Squire's letter assured the loyalty of his people for three or four days, before the expiration of which time it was to be hoped that all would be settled. These letters were written on 27 April, and they must have reached the Admiralty before the end of the month. By that time more than a week had passed since the promise of reforms had been given to the seamen; but if the Lords of the Admiralty had taken these warnings and had urged the ministry to bring in the bill, they might still have prevented the second mutiny, or at least they would have deprived the ringleaders of all pretence of justification. Unfortunately they were misled by the continual reports that the seamen were entirely loyal and contented; and they did not pay serious attention to these signs of danger.

Lord Spencer was largely responsible for the policy of the authorities in dealing with the mutiny: therefore he cannot altogether escape from blame. In the early part of the crisis, before its importance was thoroughly understood, the Lords of the Admiralty, as we have seen, made two mistakes, and were only saved from another blunder by a unanimous warning from the senior officers of the Channel fleet.[1] But the censure should be light, for Spencer's position was extraordinarily difficult. The situation was without precedent. To foresee the behaviour of the seamen, and to understand their suspicions, would have needed either an intimate knowledge of their outlook and their character or a remarkable power of intuition. And during the Nore mutiny, when Spencer had had experience of personal dealings with the seamen and realized both the strength and the weakness of their position, he made no mistake in his policy. We should remember, too, to Spencer's credit, that in the time of his administration the navy was

1. On 20 April, when they wanted to try the effect of cutting the cables and taking the ships to St. Helens. See above, p. 34.

maintained at a very high level of efficiency, and its success was undoubtedly due in part to his efforts. His letters written during the mutinies show a close attention to the duties of his office, and a wish to deal fairly with all classes of men in the naval service.[1]

We are now in a position to share out the responsibility for the second mutiny with some approach to justice. The last speaker on the vote of censure said that no blame attached "to the noble Lord at the head of the Admiralty, but there was certainly a criminal neglect on the part of ministers."[2] Both of his opinions were wrong. We have seen that the ministers were only accidentally, not culpably, responsible; and that the Lords of the Admiralty were to some extent to blame for their want of tact in issuing the order of 1 May, and to a smaller extent for their failure to see the urgency of the Act of Parliament. The seamen also were at fault, for they were suspicious when they might have been confident and were foolishly credulous when they ought to have been sceptical. But the really guilty persons were the unknown disturbers of the peace who persuaded the seamen that their Bill was "hove out."

1. From the point of view of later generations it is a further circumstance in Spencer's favour that he had a fine collection of books, which is now the nucleus of the Rylands Library, in Manchester.
2. Speech of Lord George Cavendish, *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxiii, p. 516.

NOTE 1. THE CONDITION OF THE FLEET ON 7 MAY.

The letters to Bridport from the captains under his command, which are enclosed with his dispatch, J 262 (A.S.I. 107), give a vivid impression of the helplessness of the officers in the face of an overwhelming majority of the mutineers; and I think it worth while to give a summary of them here:

(i) *Pompée* (Capt. Vashon), 7 May. At 9 a.m. the crew gathered at the forecastle and the tops, shrouds and booms, and gave three cheers. They told Vashon that they wanted to have their rights confirmed by parliament. They took a boat against orders for the tour of the fleet. The marines joined with the seamen. (The word "rights" should be noticed. It implies the presence of revolutionary feeling which became prominent on the *Pompée* a few weeks later).

(ii) *Terrible* (Capt. Campbell), 7 May. Some boats from other ships came alongside at 11 a.m. The crew were reluctant to join the mutiny, but the men of the *Pompée* threatened to fire on them. When they were thus coerced, they gave three cheers, reeved the yard ropes, and contributed a boat and two delegates to the procession.

(iii) *Queen Charlotte* (Capt. Cook), 7 May. At 9 a.m. a boat (from the *Mars*) came alongside. Cook ordered it away and called the marines under arms. But they would not obey him. The crew broke out into active mutiny, and told Cook that he would be deprived of command until the passing of the required act of parliament.

(iv) *Glory* (Capt. Brine), 7 May. The crew would not obey the Captain at all. At 9 a.m. they cheered with the rest of the fleet, "for an act of parliament and an honest three pounds of pork."

(v) *Duke* (Capt. Holloway), 7 May. Delegates were sent out in a boat, as from other ships. The crew were apprehensive of the meaning of the debate in the House of Lords. Holloway read to them the proposal for an increased grant to the Navy that was to be laid before the House of Commons, but the seamen would not give him any answer until their delegates should return.

(vi) *Defiance* (Capt. Jones), 7 May. A boat came from the *Pompée,* and on its arrival the crew cheered and rove the yard-ropes.

(vii) *Ramillies* (Capt. Bickerton), 7 May. Bickerton tried to bring the crew to reason, but they remained mutinous.

(viii) *Defence* (Capt. Webb), 7 May. Men from the *Pompée* arrived at 10.30 a.m. and demanded two delegates. The crew at first refused to mutiny; but they were threatened by the guns of the *Pompée* and *Glory*, and yielded. They fixed the yard-ropes and gave three cheers. Webb ordered the marines under arms; but he decided that it would be useless to resist the rest of the fleet, and abandoned the attempt.

(ix) *Mars* (Capt. Hood). The crew were discontented because of the reports in the newspapers, and because the *Marlborough* was detained at Spithead. They sent out a boat, which went to the *Queen Charlotte*, and then joined the procession round the fleet.

(This information is confirmed in the papers of the *Queen Charlotte*. The men from the *Mars* were admitted on board by the ship's company, and they brought more newspapers with them. It will be remembered that a boat from the *Mars* had taken papers to the *Queen Charlotte* a day or two before. Probably the two ships lay close together, and communication between them might be fairly frequent.)

(x) *Robust* (Capt. Thornborough), 7 May. At 9 a.m. the crew cheered in answer to the other ships. A rumour was spread among the crew that parliament would not grant the money required, and that the Duke of Clarence had spoken against the seamen in the House of Lords. (As a matter of fact he had merely said that "as a professional man he deprecated" a discussion of the mutinies as "pregnant with the most dangerous consequences to the service." *Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 475). Thirteen boats came alongside; a delegate from the *Queen Charlotte* said that the *Marlborough* was wanted at St. Helens; and the two previous delegates of the *Robust* went off with the procession. Yard ropes were hung on the ship and the marines joined with the sailors.

(xi) *Minotaur* (Capt. Louis), 7 May. The crew cheered with the rest of the fleet. And when a boat came from the *Pompée*, the delegates of the *Minotaur* went with their colleagues to bring down the *Marlborough* to St. Helens.

(xii) *Incendiary* (Capt. Barker), 6 May. The crew cheered and showed signs of insubordination in the morning. They said that they were waiting for the act of parliament.

(This was apparently a spontaneous outbreak, before the time agreed upon for the general mutiny).

(xiii) *Royal Sovereign* (Admiral Gardner), 7 May :

" Dear Admiral (Pole),

I lament the dreadful situation that we are again reduced to, and God only knows where all this mischief is to end. I have no comfort to afford Lord Bridport, or I would with very great pleasure wait upon him. The present mutinous disposition I believe is occasioned by the speeches which the papers say were delivered on Wednesday last by the Duke of Bedford and other great personages in the House of Lords."

This letter from Sir Alan Gardner was evidently addressed to Admiral Pole, for it was given to Bridport on 7 May. Pole and Bridport were both on the *Royal George* at the time. Colpoys, the only other Admiral in the fleet, was then a prisoner on the *Queen Charlotte,* and a letter addressed to him certainly would not reach Bridport on the same day.

Gardner added next day, in a letter to Nepean (A.S.I. 107, J 268), that the ship's company had taken possession of his cabin, and had seized all the arms and ammunition on the ship. They told Gardner that he and the other admirals had deceived them. They had misconstrued the order of 1 May, and believed that unless they rose in self-defence their ringleaders would be punished. " To what length they mean to carry this mutiny, God alone knows."

NOTE 2. THE CONDITION OF THE FLEET ON 9 MAY.

As an indication of the progress of the mutiny, it may be interesting to compare the state of the fleet on 9 May with its condition on the seventh.

The following ships had moved to St. Helens on 7 or 8 May : *London, Marlborough, Monarch, Virginie, Nymphe, Melpomene, Sta. Margarita, Hind, Eurydice.* The *Royal William* must have been the only ship of the line left at Portsmouth. It may have been the policy of the seamen to clear away from the harbour and from Spithead every vessel that might be dangerous in case of a conflict between the mutineers and the government.

The dispatches of Bridport and Parker show that on 9 May officers had been sent ashore from nearly every ship :

Royal Sovereign : Admiral Gardner sent ashore. He was asked to return, but he wanted to retire. (J 275).

London : Colpoys and Griffith in close confinement and in danger. All the lieutenants except three imprisoned.

Terrible : Captain Campbell and all officers except master and one midshipman ashore.

Mars : Captain Hood, lieutenants and chaplain on shore.

Duke : Captain Holloway and all officers except master and surgeon on shore.

Pompée : Four lieutenants, and lieutenant of marines on shore.

Marlborough : Captain Nicholls and various officers on shore.

Defiance : Two lieutenants, five midshipmen and gunner on shore.

Nymphe : Captain Cook and two lieutenants on shore.

Queen Charlotte : Captain Lock ordered to go ashore, but instructed by Bridport to stay on the ship until he was forced to go.

Gory : Captain Brine and seven other officers sent ashore without warning (J 278).

Robust : Supposed that officers were sent ashore.

Hind : Captain Bazeley, two lieutenants, gunner, purser, and two master's mates sent ashore. Master ordered to take the ship to St. Helens (A 428). The boatswain and a midshipman had been sent ashore on 7 May at an hour's notice (A 426).

Virginie : Captain Hunt deprived of his command, but still on board (A 426).

Pearl : Surgeon and boatswain on shore.

Some officers had also been dismissed from *Glenmore, Eurydice, Latona,* and *Phaeton.*

All these details are taken from A.S.I. 107, J 272, unless other references are given.

NOTE 3. ON THE ESTIMATES

The estimates were first made for the whole year, and afterwards reduced, for the grant was only needed for nine lunar months. (It was first arranged that the increase of wages should date from 24 April—exactly nine months from the end of the year—but four days were conceded because Bridport had made a promise that the increase should begin on 20 April. These four days would add nearly £4,000 to the expenses (see A.S.I. 107, J 280).

The estimate of the grant needed for wages was complicated by the fact that the payment of the various ships would fall due on many different dates. Probably it was calculated on the average of some preceding years. The additional amount for a

whole year was fixed at £351,000. The Admiralty had decided to make various improvements in the quality of the provisions, but it was impossible to prophesy how much the improvements would cost. The estimates for victualling were therefore based on the old standard of 19s. a month for every man. There were 120,000 men in the navy, including marines; and the expense of their provisions was to be increased by one-eighth. Thus the additional cost of provisions for a whole year would amount to £185,250—in the estimates it was given as £185,000—and the total increase for a year was reckoned as £536,000. The sum demanded by the Admiralty and voted by Parliament £372,000, was nine-thirteenths of this amount; with the allowance of a small margin (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 505).

It may be observed that as the nominal pound of provisions previously served to the seamen only weighed 14 ounces, the increase in weight, and therefore the increase in cost, ought to have been one-seventh instead of one-eighth. The only possible explanation not involving a mathematical blunder is that 19s. a month covered the cost of the full 16 ounces. If this were so, it would seem that the Admiralty made a quasi-profit by only providing 14 ounces; and that instead of yielding up this profit to the seamen, they demanded the cost of another 2 ounces per nominal pound from Parliament. Thus they would really receive a grant sufficient to provide 18 ounces in a nominal pound, and while supplying an honest 16 ounces they would still have the same margin of quasi-profit. Otherwise the question would arise whether the Admiralty ought to have asked for an increase of one-seventh in the grant for victualling; or whether the new one-pound weights that were being prepared by the Victualling Board (see A.S.M. 118, 2 May) were actually only heavier by one-eighth than the old 14 ounce weights, that is whether they weighed only $15\frac{3}{4}$ ounces. But it is much more likely that 19s. a month was the full cost of providing each man with victuals at the rate of 16 ounces in a pound, not the net cost at the rate of 14 ounces. If it were not so, it would be difficult to account for the system of allowing two ounces for leakage. Apparently the two ounces were now added in the estimates instead of being subtracted from the rations.

BOOK III.

The Mutiny at the Nore

PART I.

CHAPTER IX.

The Outbreak.

The year 1797 produced an epidemic of mutinies in England, similar to the epidemic of revolutions that broke out half a century later over a large part of Europe. However difficult it may have been in the first place to transform a dutiful, though unhappy, sailor into a mutineer, when once the spirit of mutiny appeared it spread with alarming ease. We have already seen that when the mutiny at Spithead and its offshoot at Plymouth had subsided, there were strikes and disorders on many of the ships which called at Portsmouth. Any crews that had a grievance, however trifling, against their officers, felt that the day of recompense had come. Even the workers in the Portsmouth dockyard took advantage of the general confusion and went on strike.[1] And the marines in the Channel fleet sent a curious letter to Howe, complaining of "the unnecessary trouble of the cloaths we weare at present," and proposing a new uniform.[2]

It is not surprising that the contagion should spread to the fleet stationed at the Nore. We might rather wonder that the mutiny did not begin there.[3] The seamen at Sheerness suffered the same hardships that occasioned the mutiny at Portsmouth; and they were, on an average,

1. *Belfast News Letter* and *Northern Star*, 12 May.
2. King to Nepean (encl.), 31 May (A.S.I. 4172).
3. There were, in fact, one or two isolated cases of mutiny in the early months of 1797. *E.g.*, on 6 February ten men of the *Hind* complained of harsh treatment by the boatswain, and two men of the *Sandwich*, recently transferred from the *Reunion*, were reported as too ill to receive a punishment which they had incurred for mutinous conduct (A.S.I. 727, C 107, 108). But there was no sign of an organized rising until after the first mutiny at Spithead.

men of an inferior class. The Admiralty made it an article of policy to supply the ships of the Channel fleet with steady and capable men, because the services of that fleet were of vital importance to the country. But at the Nore there were a large number of unreliable persons —chiefly quota-men, many of them fresh from prison, and others likely to find their way there if they remained on land. How came it then, that the mutinous spirit appeared first among the better seamen, and that the less reliable men at the Nore remained quiet and orderly for nearly a month after the first outbreak at Spithead?

The explanation is that the vessels at the Nore were not a properly constituted fleet, but rather a chance collection of ships belonging to different fleets. When the Nore mutiny began, Vice-Admiral Buckner, the port-Admiral in Sheerness, had under his command only a dozen ships, and the following list will show that most of them were frigates or sloops:—

	Guns.	Commander.	Station.
Sandwich (Flagship)	90	Vice-Admiral Buckner	Great Nore
		Captain Mosse	
Director	64	Captain Bligh	,,
Grampus (Store ship armed en flûte)		Captain Carne	,,
Swan	16	Captain Stapp	,,
Inflexible	64	Captain Ferris	,,
Champion	24	Captain Raper	,,
San Fiorenzo	40	Captain Sir Harry Neale	Little Nore
Clyde	38	Captain Cunningham	,,
Iris	32	Captain Surridge	,,
Espion	38	Captain Manley Dixon	Sheerness Harbour
Niger	32	Captain Foote	,,
Firm (floating battery)	24	Lieut. H. Pine	Off Sheerness [1]

1. This list is taken from *Cunningham*, pp. 2-3. Cunningham, who commanded the *Clyde* at the time of the mutiny, afterwards became a Vice-Admiral, and Commandant of the Dockyard at Chatham. Bligh, the Captain of the *Director*, had already been through one mutiny, the celebrated revolt on the *Bounty*.

Of the larger ships the *Sandwich* alone was permanently stationed at the Nore. The *Inflexible* and the *Champion* were ready for sea, and were under orders to join the main squadron of the North Sea fleet, which was at Yarmouth under the command of Duncan. The *San Fiorenzo* had orders to escort the Princess Royal to Germany, after her marriage with the Grand Duke of Würtemberg; the *Espion* and the *Niger* were refitting in the harbour. The *Grampus* was preparing for a voyage to the West Indies. Thus the crews were largely strangers to one another, and there could not be, in the fleet as a whole, enough corporate feeling to originate and concert a plan of mutiny. It was for this reason, and not for want of the inclination to revolt, that the causes which produced the mutinies only took effect at the Nore after their work was perfected in the Channel fleet. But when once the example had been set it was readily followed, and the very act of organizing the mutiny probably brought about the community of feeling and the personal acquaintance which had previously been lacking.

No documents are left to show exactly how the mutiny was prepared; but there is enough indirect evidence to enable us to discover the general method with certainty. And the conclusion is that the rising at the Nore was, in the beginning, simply an offshoot from the Spithead mutiny. The delegates at Spithead asked the seamen at the Nore to join them in urging the redress of their common grievances, and the Nore mutiny was the answer to this demand.

We have seen how unlikely it was that a spontaneous outbreak could occur in the Nore fleet. We may now examine the grounds for believing that the stimulus actually came from Spithead, not only by example, but by direct incitement. In the first place the mutiny at Plymouth, which began on 26 April, was certainly due to representations from the squadron at Spithead. Four

ships of the line showed signs of mutiny, and Sir John Orde, the Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth, found that the disturbance was due to "threats and persuasions of the crews of His Majesty's Ships at Portsmouth." The seamen themselves admitted that they had received letters from Portsmouth, and had been influenced by them. Two deputations were sent from Plymouth to Portsmouth, and throughout the mutiny the seamen at the two ports were in close communication, and the policy of the Plymouth mutineers was always directed from the Grand Fleet.[1]

Further, there was a slight outbreak on 30 April, among the crew of Duncan's flagship, the *Venerable*, stationed at Yarmouth. The ship's company gathered in the forecastle and cheered. Duncan called them to the quarter-deck, where the officers were collected and the marines drawn up under arms. He questioned five of the crew, who seemed to be ringleaders, and they explained that they wanted to know when the increase of their wages and provisions would begin. Duncan satisfied the crew in regard to the promised reforms, and they returned quietly to their duty. The marines were perfectly loyal, and obeyed their orders "as quick as thought." On the same day there was a similar rising on the *Nassau*, which was suppressed by Rear-Admiral Onslow.[2]

Finally, on 6 May, mutinous symptoms appeared in the Nore fleet. A circular was sent to the different ships calling on them to send delegates to the *Sandwich* for the purpose of drawing up an oath to be administered to the seamen at the beginning of the projected mutiny.[3] And the actual outbreak came six days later.

When we consider that all these signs of mutinous

1. Orde to Nepean, A.S.I. 811, particularly B 302, 307, 309, 323, 368, 380.

2. Duncan to Nepean, 1 May, A.S.I. 524, F 110. See also the Life of Duncan, by the Earl of Camperdown, p. 98.

3. A.S.M. 137 (Rough Minutes), Papers of the *Champion*, no. 1.

feeling occurred in quick succession in different ports, and that in one case the trouble was certainly due to deliberate encouragement from Spithead, we can see that the different risings were the outcome of a consistent policy. It was clearly the policy of the delegates at Spithead to persuade the seamen in all the chief ports to revolt at the same time, in order to compel the government to grant in full the demands put forward in the first Spithead mutiny. The delegates would hardly adopt such a plan at a time when it seemed likely that they themselves were strong enough to secure all their demands. More probably they decided to arrange a general rising in the home fleets when they had grown suspicious of the government. The dates show that the letters to Plymouth, Yarmouth and the Nore were not written in the early days of May, when it was believed that "the seamen's bill was hove out," for in every one of these stations the disaffection had appeared before the beginning of the second Spithead mutiny. The new policy was almost certainly a result of Gardner's dispute with the delegates on 21 May. It will be remembered that at that time the suspicion of the delegates was aroused, so that they determined not to weigh anchor until their terms were ratified by Parliament. In all probability they decided at the same time to appeal to the other fleets. They returned to duty themselves, but it can hardly be doubted that if the wind had been favourable and Bridport had attempted to put to sea, they would have broken into mutiny.

One other conclusion may be drawn from the evidence. In their letters to the different ports the delegates at Spithead seem to have included a full description of their methods and of their system of discipline. The regulations adopted at Plymouth and at the Nore,[1] followed the system evolved at Spithead so closely, even in details, that the ringleaders in the later mutinies must have

1. See below, p. 110.

known exactly how the Spithead mutiny had been conducted.

We may conclude that the first impulse to mutiny in the Nore fleet was the work of the Spithead delegates. A few days after the outbreak at the Nore it was said in the *Star*: "The mutiny at Sheerness appears, from every possible inquiry, to have originated in the first instance from the representations of the sailors at Portsmouth, communicated to those at the Nore, either by letter or by persons sent for that purpose from the Grand Fleet." [1] There is every reason for believing that this report was well founded.[2]

It is curious, however, that the mutiny at the Nore began so much later than the disturbances at Plymouth and Yarmouth. In both these ports there were signs of mutiny before the end of April, but there is no evidence that anything at all happened at the Nore until 6 May, and the actual outbreak did not take place until the twelfth. The most likely explanation is that the ships at the Nore were scattered in different parts of the Thames mouth and Sheerness harbour, so that communication between them would be comparatively difficult. In a compact fleet in which boats were often passing from one ship to another, it would be easy to convey letters without arousing suspicion. But at the Nore there could be little intercourse except on the days of ship visiting, and even when the letters from Portsmouth had reached the *Sandwich*—they would almost certainly be directed to the flagship—several days probably passed before the contents could be made known to the whole fleet; and the preparations for the mutiny

1. *Star*, 18 May. The same paragraph appears in the *London Packet*, 17–19 May.

2. The Lords of the Admiralty did not realize at this time the extent of the conspiracy in the home fleets. They attributed the outbreak at the Nore to "a belief which the seamen entertained in the first instance that the Act of Parliament for increasing their pay and provisions had not yet passed, and afterwards that their brethren at Portsmouth had been ill-used." Nepean to Buckner, 13 May, A.S.M. 137.

must have been made slowly and with much inconvenience. If the letters from Spithead were written directly after the Admirals' visit to the *Queen Charlotte* (21 April), there was an interval of three weeks between the dispatch of the letters and the beginning of the Nore mutiny.

It happened, however, that the time of the outbreak was well chosen. On 12 May Vice-Admiral Buckner and several of the captains had gone early in the morning to attend a court-martial on board the *Inflexible*, and their ships were in charge of lieutenants.[1] The *Sandwich*, Buckner's flagship, was left in command of second Lieutenant Justice.[2] Nothing unusual happened at breakfast time; but at half-past nine, when all hands were turned on deck to clear hawse, they crowded forward and gave three cheers—a proceeding which was by that time recognized as the regular signal for mutiny. The disorder spread to other ships; and when the captains returned from the hurriedly adjourned court-martial, several of them saw the ominous ropes hanging from the yard-arms, and knew by that sign that their authority was already taken from them.

Buckner went straight back to Sheerness; but Mosse, his captain, returned to the *Sandwich*. His reception on the ship is vividly described in a report to Buckner:

> As you will naturally expect to hear from me, knowing a boat is sent into the harbour from the ship, I shall just describe to you the state I found the *Sandwich* in. The people all quiet, but had taken the command of the ship, planted sentinels with cutlasses both on the decks and gangways, were in possession of the keys of the magazine, store rooms, etc. On my reaching the quarter-deck, I desired the boatswain to call all hands aft, in order to address them or hear their grievances, if they had any; but a cry of "No, No" prevailed generally forward. I then went forward to the fore-hatchway and found the principals were thereabouts,

1. *Cunningham*, pp. 1, 3.
2. Evidence of Lieutenant Justice at Parker's court-martial (A.S.I. 5486).

when I descended among them, requesting to know the cause of such irregular conduct, and that if they had any grievances I was desirous to hear and redress them as far as I was able. Some voices said that if I would return to the quarter-deck, ten or twelve would speak their grievances to me there. Shortly, a message was sent me, that they must wait the arrival of the delegates, who, I found, were gone to other ships.

The master is their chosen commander, and who conveys all messages between me and them. Delegates have come on board from some of the other ships, and at present their council-chamber is the starboard bay. Their steps exactly copied from their brethren at Portsmouth. They sent soon after I got on board, demanded and almost instantly seized all the arms, which, I am told, are lodged in a store-room below. They are strict in their discipline and look-out, and have a watchful jealousy throughout. I understand at present, they will allow me to go or send boats to and from the ship, but I shall be able to say more after speaking with the delegates.[1]

On the same day (12 May) the revolt against authority became general.[2] The seamen were ready for it, and the officers were not. As a result, the beginning of the mutiny was quiet and unopposed. The lack of resistance was really extraordinary. Eight days passed before the seamen gave to the world any written explanation of their conduct, and for twelve days they were allowed to behave as they pleased. They were not only complete masters of the fleet: they came on shore without hindrance, and even sent messengers to other ports. The seamen thus had ample time to decide their policy and method of administration.

1. A.S.I. 727, C 318 a.
2. A circular was sent to the various ships on that day, summoning another meeting of delegates on the *Sandwich*, probably to draw up regulations for the mutiny. A.S.M. 137, Papers of *Champion*, no. 2.

CHAPTER X.

Characteristics of the Mutiny.

It will be well to take advantage of this period of comparative peace to describe, in a general way, the manner in which the mutiny was conducted, and the daily routine of the seamen in these early days of their revolt. In the first place we should notice that the disorder in the beginning seemed much less serious than the outbreak at Spithead. Only three ships of the line were concerned in it,[1] together with a few frigates and smaller vessels; and the authorities on shore may well have regarded this rising as a mere echo of the Spithead mutiny. They might reasonably expect that Lord Howe's accommodation with the seamen of Bridport's squadron would satisfy the fleet at Sheerness, as it satisfied the squadrons under Curtis and Orde. This fact probably accounts in some measure for the apparent indifference with which the Nore mutiny was treated at first.[2] Every one was waiting to know the result of Lord Howe's dealings at Spithead, and no one paid any serious attention to the new disorder which was so plainly a smaller copy of the other.[3]

It is indeed clear enough that the mutineers at the Nore profited by the example of their "brethren at Spithead."

1. *Sandwich, Inflexible* and *Director.*

2. On 13 May Nepean wrote to Buckner in regard to the outbreak at the Nore: "As affairs are now, however, in so favourable a train, their Lordships hope and trust that a happy termination will be put to these matters in the course of a few hours" (A.S.M. 137).

3. Among the papers of the *Champion* is a letter from a seaman of the *Phaeton* (no. 4), suggesting the dismissal of officers after the manner adopted by the Spithead mutineers; and another, from the captain of the forecastle of the *Inflexible*, (no. 3), advising the men of the *Champion* to "imitate . . . the successful resistance of the fleet at Spithead."

The mutiny was ushered in with the familiar ceremonies —cheering, hoisting of yard-ropes and red flags, and election of delegates. The "Orders and Regulations" that were issued by the delegates on the thirteenth were very largely copied from the rules that were in force at Spithead.

The regulations are preserved among the papers of the *Repulse*. They are dated 13 May 1797, and they were probably drawn up at the meeting of delegates on the previous day:

Art. 1. Unanimity the only means of gaining the end in view.

Art. 2. Strict discipline to be maintained. No private liquor allowed.

Art. 3. Respect to superior officers. Duty to be carried on as before.

Art. 4. An early communication with all delegates, to bring about a speedy remedy.

Art. 5. No master or pilot to go ashore.

Art. 6. All unsuitable officers to be sent ashore, as at Spithead.

At the end of the rules is a curiously constructed sentence giving to the ships' committees the power of making further rules on their own behalf: "Any regulation which may occur among yourselves for the preservation of good order, you will add them to the above."[1]

But from the very beginning the mutineers at the Nore showed themselves more pretentious than their predecessors. Besides the central committee of delegates of the whole fleet, there was a committee of twelve

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 40 (A.S.I. 727, C 370a). The second rule includes rules (1) and (4) of the Spithead regulations; the third is rule (5) of the Spithead code. Other rules borrowed from Spithead, *e.g.*, those relating to cheering and the oath of fidelity, were observed at the Nore, though they were not included in the official list. The object of the fifth clause is clearly that in case the fleet should find it expedient to put to sea, there might be men at hand who were capable of taking command and steering.

appointed on each ship, and one of the twelve was chosen to act as captain. When the seamen of the Channel fleet went ashore, they were content to sit quietly on the beach, or wander about in small groups, or enjoy unwonted rest and refreshment in the public houses. But with the Nore seamen it was far different. They landed at Sheerness every day in large numbers, and marched through the streets in a procession, accompanied by a brass band, and led by their standard-bearer, MacCann.[1] When the leaders of the mutiny were rowed through the fleet every ship's company cheered them as they passed. And on water as on land the brass band was ubiquitous, giving heart to the mutineers with its limited and patriotic programme—" God save the King," " Rule Britannia " and " Britons Strike Home." The delegates, in fact, tried to perform every function with pomp and ceremony in order to magnify the importance of their office and to popularize the mutiny among the seamen by giving it the appearance of a gala.

They held committee meetings in the public houses at Sheerness.[2] After the meetings they used the taverns for more festive purposes; and when they were with the fleet they sometimes held carousals on the *Sandwich* which lasted till the early morning.[3] In the course of their processions they marched without opposition through the

1. Evidence against Thomas MacCann, A.S.I. 4172. MacCann was in bad health at this time, and was twice examined by the Surgeon of the *Sandwich*. Both the Surgeon and the committee of delegates wanted him to go to the Hospital, but he refused to leave the mutiny, and "swore he was determined to stay and see it out." He opened a letter from Admiral Buckner, which the delegates claimed as their perquisite, and as a punishment for his presumption (according to his own account) he was sent from the *Sandwich*, where the most important business was done, to the *Director*. But he seems to have have had great influence with the crew of the *Director*, and it was probably, in a large measure, because of his presence that the ship did not leave the mutiny near the end of May, when the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* escaped. See evidence of Snipe, Surgeon of the *Sandwich*, at MacCann's court-martial, A.S.I. 5486.

2. *Cunningham*, p. 10. The "Chequers" Inn was their head-quarters on shore.

3. Evidence of Lieut. Paul, of the *Sandwich*, at the trial of Gregory and others. A.S.I. 5486.

dock-yards, and even entered the garrison to enlist the sympathy of the soldiery. Sir Charles Grey, the commander, was a man with considerable strength of character.[1] He would not admit the mutineers into the barracks; but they interrupted the militia on parade outside. Some of them shook hands with friends whom they recognized in the ranks; and no one had authority to stay them. As Sir Charles Grey said, "every one indulgence (was) granted them that could be given to the most loyal, well-disposed and well-disciplined fleet." It was indeed "a most perfectly new and strange and an uncommon method of crushing rebellion in the bud." [2]

The seamen were not content with going ashore at Sheerness. Several of them travelled up to London, and four of them were sent to Portsmouth to establish communications with the Channel fleet.[3] Some went to London to consult a solicitor, presumably in regard to the arguments by which they should justify the mutiny before the public and before the government. One of these seamen, who had been doing business with Fitzgerald, a solicitor of Leman Street, afterwards called at an inn across the road. His conversation with the innkeeper was reported to the Admiralty. He said that men went ashore at Sheerness armed with pistols and cutlasses, and that he never saw anything "prettier conducted" in his life. The Admiral and his officers were "thought nothing of." "He (putting himself into an attitude of self-consequence) was more thought of than

1. "A spirited fellow." Marsden to Nepean, 29 May (A.S.M. 137).

2. Grey to Dundas, 25 June (A.S.I. 4172). Grey added that if the mutineers had been really energetic they might easily have blown up the dock-yards at Sheerness. The remark shows that he misunderstood the motives of the seamen, and failed to see the distinction between mutiny and open rebellion. Though some of the mutineers might have been willing to adopt such violent measures they could only be a small minority. It was not lack of energy but lack of sedition that saved the dock-yards. This incident happened when the mutiny had been in progress for some time. There was no regular garrison in the fort until 21 May.

3. See below, p. 131.

the Admiral." He said that he was on his way to Portsmouth—he was travelling in a post-chaise—and that he had power to draw money wherever he pleased.[1]

Perhaps this mutineer was the man who was arrested in Exeter, nearly a fortnight later, as a deserter from a ship in Plymouth. The deserter, Thomas Williams, was heard to say in a public house in Exeter that he was a delegate from Sheerness; that he had done his business in Plymouth, and was returning to the Nore. He said that he could draw money in any town, and to any amount—a boast which is curiously like that of the mutineer in Leman Street,—and added "that the sailors had long been put upon, but now they would get their rights." When he was arrested, Williams denied that he was a sailor, but a seaman's outfit was found in his baggage, and he was soon identified as a quota-man who had recently joined the *Braakel* at Plymouth, had received his bounty money on 6 June, and had almost immediately deserted. It appeared that Williams made a regular practice of volunteering and deserting, for he confessed to having had more than £200 in bounties during the war.[2]

Whether the sailor in Leman Street was really Thomas Williams or another, his behaviour was characteristic of the mutineers. Their aggressive conduct and their truculent speech were natural to a body of ill-educated men used to poverty and oppressive discipline, who suddenly found themselves in a position of power, free from the law itself. And to some extent their confidence was justified by the friendly attitude of the public on shore, who connected this mutiny with the risings at

1. Evidence of John and Sarah Carter (Solicitor's letters, A.S.I. 3685). This conversation took place on Saturday 27 May. In the evidence the date is wrongly given as the 26th.

2. The Mayor of Exeter to Admiral King, 9 June (A.S.I. 812, B 464). Williams was tried, and punished with a severe flogging. His statement in regard to bounties is not impossible, for the recruiting officers found such difficulty in supplying the fleet with men that they made little inquiry into the life histories of the volunteers.

Spithead, and consequently regarded it at first with favour.[1]

The internal economy of the fleet must have been less easily managed than the outward display of assurance. Even among themselves the seamen showed something of the same taste for ceremony, and the delegates demanded all the deference that was commonly paid to the officers. The officers, moreover, who remained on the ships were taught that the régime of equality and fraternity had come. Captain Ferris, of the *Inflexible*, was rated by the delegates as a midshipman,[2] and the surgeon of the *Sandwich*, when he went to report some cases of fever to the committee of his ship, was forced to remove his hat.[3]

Most of the officers were either imprisoned on the ships or sent on shore. Some of them were evidently dismissed with very short notice, so that they had not even time to pack their goods. The following letter shows the discomfort suffered by one of the evicted officers :

> Mr. Ellery, Purser of the *Proserpine*, will be much obliged to Mrs. Burbidge if she will desire Charles Nichols to let his boy put his pantaloons, two waistcoats and his coat into his dirty cloaths bag and give it to Mrs. Burbidge to bring on shore, he having no cloaths but what he has on.[4]

In the absence of the proper commanders the mutineers themselves had to see to the management of the ships. It was for this reason, in addition to the central committee of the delegates of the whole fleet, a committee of twelve was elected on each ship, and one of the twelve was appointed to act as captain.

1. Sir Charles Grey (letter to Dundas, u.s.) says that down to the time of the Admiralty's visit to Sheerness (27 May) the public were inclined to favour the seamen.
2. *Cunningham*, p. 7 (13 May).
3. Court-martial of Parker (A.S.I. 5486), evidence of Snipe, Surgeon of the *Sandwich*.
4. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 6. This note suggests that the mutineers at the Nore did not enforce the regulation which had been made at Spithead, forbidding women to leave the fleet.

But behind this pretentious exterior the delegates were doing serious work and encountering difficulties not without skill and success.

It is a tribute to the ability of the leaders and the steadiness of the men as a whole that the mutiny in its early stages was administered with so little trouble. If, as some writers have supposed, the majority of the seamen had mutinied merely in order to be free from discipline, the fleet would have been in a state of confusion and the men who did not desert would have been riotous and dissolute.[1] It is proof enough of a principle underlying the mutiny, that the routine of the fleet was carried on in almost every respect as it would have been if the Articles of War had still been in force.

There was no one motive common to all the seamen. Some of them only joined the mutiny under compulsion. But the majority certainly believed that the Admiralty were treating them unfairly, and that justice would not be done until the government had been forced or frightened into compliance with their demands. They had learnt to mistrust their rulers; but they had not realized—for the good news was suppressed by their ringleaders—that nearly all the grievances against which they were clamouring had been removed by Parliament or were about to be removed by the Admiralty. With such convictions they entered whole-heartedly into the mutiny, determined to reject the authority of the officers, but determined to do their duty in every other respect, as became honest and loyal men.

The seamen as a whole were not moved by a spirit of mischief, by a simple desire to taste for themselves the pleasures of mutiny. There was undoubtedly a turbulent element in the fleet, and a disloyal element as well. And these two sections would naturally supply the most active

1. *E.g.*, James says: "The mutineers at the Nore had no solid nor even plausible ground of complaint. They appear to have been actuated by a mere mischief-making spirit, with scarcely a knowledge of the object they had in view."

and violent supporters of the mutiny. But both together must have been only a small proportion of the whole number of men concerned. If the majority had been men of vicious and unruly character they would have behaved badly when the officers were dismissed, and they would have carried the mutiny to extreme lengths. But in the actual course of events the behaviour of the mutineers for a fortnight or more was excellent; and when it became known in the fleet that the mutiny was not supported by public opinion, the majority of the seamen brought about the surrender of the ships, after crushing the opposition of the more violent faction. Thus it is clear that the ordinary seaman was persuaded, not compelled to join the mutiny, and that he joined with the conviction that he was merely vindicating his rights against an unjust and oppressive administration.

The agreement of the majority was the chief cause of the good order that prevailed in the fleet. Without it the mutiny must have collapsed within a few days through sheer anarchy. But the delegates wisely were unwilling to rely merely on the consent of the majority. They knew, as the delegates at Spithead knew, that good order and unanimity was essential; that everyone must give at least a passive support to the mutiny, and must recognize the authority of the delegates. The expedients which they adopted to this end were the same that had been used at Spithead. An oath of allegiance to the delegates was exacted from every member of the fleet; and it was so faithfully kept that after the mutiny Lord Keith proposed as a valuable precaution that in future every seaman or marine, before receiving his wages or bounty, should be made to swear allegiance to the King and Constitution.[1] A copy of the form of this oath is among the papers found on the *Repulse*:

1. A.S.I. 4172, 27 June. Keith gave as the reason for this suggestion the great importance that the mutineers had attached to their oath of fidelity to the delegates. A similar proposal was made by the magistrates Graham and Williams, in their report at the end of the mutiny. H. O. George III (Domestic), 41.

I, A.B., do voluntary make oath and swear that I will be true in the cause we are embarked in and I will to the laying down of my life be true to the Delegates at present assembl'd, whilst they continue to support the present cause, and I will communicate to them at all times all such things as may be for the good of our undertakings and all conspiracies that may tend to the subversion of our present plan. I will also endeavour to detect and suppress as full as in my power everything that may lead to a separation of the unity so necessary (to) completing our present system.[1]

The method of administering the oath which was adopted on the *Leopard*, in the later mutiny at Yarmouth, was probably used on many of the ships. The ringleaders on the *Leopard* called the men one by one into a berth and made them take the oath, which they little understood, in secrecy. When a hundred and fifty or more had been sworn in, the conspirators, feeling that their position was secure, brought down the rest of the ship's company in groups, without any attempt at concealment, except from the officers.[2] The sense of mystery and responsibility induced by this process must have helped very materially in the success of the first outbreak. The common seaman was compelled by the sacredness of his oath, by a feeling of loyalty to his class, and by an undefined dread, to support his leaders. The witnesses at the courts-martial after the Nore mutiny invariably said that they had been driven by fear both to take the oath and to obey the delegates.

On 13 May the list of regulations, presumably drafted on the twelfth, was sent by the delegates to the committee

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 7.

2. Evidence of Bowers at the trial of William Ross, of the *Leopard*, A.S.I. 5486. A curious method of intimidation was used on the *Pompée*, in the Channel fleet, when a part of the crew conspired (about 10 June) to take the ship into Brest. When the seamen were brought below to take the oath and sign their names in witness, they were told that there was a second sheet underneath the paper on which they wrote, containing five hundred names. But they were not allowed to see the other paper. Further, they were shown a proscription list, called the "Living and Dead List," and they were told that although the Dead List was still small "an example must immediately be made of some, and that young yard ropes were then growing."

of each ship. Those who devised the regulations clearly intended that the mutiny should not be a period of license, but should be a well-organized movement. In enforcing these rules the delegates assumed the same judicial power as that which had been assumed by the delegates at Spithead. The yard-ropes were a token of their authority of life and death over the common seamen.[1] It has been mentioned that each ship had its own committee of twelve delegates, of whom two served on the central committee of the whole fleet. Each of these committees acted as a court martial to try all offenders against the regulations of the delegates, and some traces of their work are still to be found.

Cunningham tells a story of an unpopular boatswain who was condemned to death by the delegates of his ship, the *Proserpine*, but was spared at the eleventh hour. He was rowed through the fleet instead with a rope round his neck and heavy swabs on his shoulders, to the accompaniment of the "Rogue's March."[2] The truth of this account may be questioned,[3] but some genuine examples of the delegates' efforts to keep order are preserved among the papers of the *Repulse*. On one of these papers[4] is written a sentence of twelve strokes of the cat to be administered to a man who had been drinking to excess. In another note[5] it is mentioned

1. Cunningham suggests that the yard-ropes were intended to frighten the officers. But I do not think that this was their main object.
2. *Cunningham*, p. 13.
3. As Cunningham could only have this story from a rumour current among his own crew, who were opponents of the mutiny, I am inclined to doubt whether the committee of the *Proserpine* really intended to hang their boatswain. They may have threatened him with death in order to frighten him. Parker often threatened to hang those who displeased him; but there is no other instance of a serious intention to hang an offender during the mutiny. The disparity between the death-sentence and the punishment actually inflicted makes the story still more unlikely. In Lord Keith's notes on the conduct of the crew (C 373 d), it is mentioned that the boatswain had been towed through the fleet with a rope round his neck; but nothing is said of an intention to hang him.
4. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 3.
5. *Ibid.*, no. 12.

that "James Day stands charged with violating two of the most sacred laws enacted for the preservation and unanimity of the ship's company, viz., drunkenness in the greatest extream, and neglect of duty." Mr. Appleby, presumably an officer of the wardroom or quarter-deck, is accused of inciting men to petition for leave to go ashore. There are three papers relating to the trial of Smith, a midshipman, who was charged with abusing a "brother" by kicking him.[1] The solemn travesty of naval administration was carried so far that the prosecutor in this trial was styled "Counsel for the Crown." It must have given peculiar pleasure to the president of the court to draft his sentence against the young officer in these patronizing terms:

> Mr. Smith, on acount of your good character and the intercession of William Johnson, the principal evidence, the jury has thought proper to mitigate the sentence that might be intail'd upon you. You are to (be) confin'd to your cabbin for twenty-four hours, and ast Mr. William Johnson's pardon.[2]

There is also a list of punishments,—chiefly for drunkenness and neglect of duty.[3] Discipline was being enforced in the same way throughout the fleet; and from the activity of the upholders of law and order we may judge that the leading mutineers were anxious to retain the sympathy of the public by making this mutiny as respectable as the other.[4]

Besides the discipline and the general policy of the fleet, there were other problems of internal administration

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, nos. 10, 11, 13.
2. *Ibid*, no. 5.
3. There appear also in the report of James Day's Trial "Council for the Crown" and for the prisoner, and a "Clerk of Arains."
4. The trials mentioned above took place in the latter part of the mutiny—the *Repulse* only came to the Nore on 31 May. But they serve as a type of the procedure of the committees. Unfortunately most of the papers taken from other ships—although they are mentioned in the Digest for 1797—seem to have been destroyed. Many of them were classed among the "Promiscuous Letters," which are only preserved from 1801 onwards.

that claimed the attention of the delegates. The management of the victuals for several thousand men[1] would not be an easy matter for those who were not used to the routine. Some of the pursers had been sent ashore; others were probably in confinement on board; and the work of dealing out the provisions must have fallen to the share of the ships' committees. Possibly some members of the committees were deputed to act as pursers, but there is no record of the way in which the difficulty was overcome. Accounts were kept of the provisions and stores of all kinds. Probably these accounts were sent to the "General Committee of Internal Regulations," a body of twelve members, which, although obscure as to its methods and constitution, must have been chiefly responsible for the smooth working of the mutiny.[2]

The problem of providing for sick men was another difficulty with which the delegates had to cope. In ordinary times the seamen commonly complained that they were not properly attended when they fell ill; but those who had the mischance to fall ill during the mutiny fared still worse. Many of the surgeons had been sent ashore, and their work was done, or partially done, by the surgeons' mates—men who had no science, but only a rough practical knowledge of nursing. There was a naval hospital in Sheerness; and when, on 24 May, the *Serapis* store ship came from Lisbon with French prisoners, and invalids from the Mediterranean fleet, the new recruits to the sick-list were sent ashore in tenders.[3] Even in Sheerness they must have been miserable. Rather more than a week before (15 May), the delegates had visited the hospital and had interviewed the patients, asking them whether they had any grievances. Apparently they complained of the two surgeons who were in charge

1. As a rough estimate, I should say that there were between three and four thousand men taking part in the mutiny at this time (12–31 May).

2. I have only found one mention of this committee (*Cunningham*, p. 15). It met on board the *Director* every morning. Most probably it was a sub-committee of the central body of delegates of the whole fleet.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

of the hospital, for the delegates treated them so roughly and terrified them so much that one ran away and the other committed suicide.[1] Another surgeon was appointed to act in their place, but he—more discreetly than heroically—refused to serve.[2] Thus the hospital was left during the mutiny to the care of assistants, and the sick berths in ships to surgeons' mates. It was probably as much by reason of the confused state of the hospital as with a view to opposing the mutiny that Admiral Buckner returned to the fleet sixty or seventy sick men whom the delegates sent to Sheerness in a tender on 5 June.[3]

Nothing more can be said of the general condition of the fleet during the mutiny. Many diaries and letters written by the seamen passed into the hands of the Admiralty. They might explain much that is obscure in the working of the mutiny; they might contain information of great interest in regard to the life and opinions of the common seamen; but apparently they are destroyed.[4] If they are gone, their loss is very much to be regretted. For there is often more of human interest and historical importance in one or two such documents than in a whole sheaf of formal dispatches.

It may be well to conclude this general description of the fleet in mutiny by trying to recall the appearance that it would present to an external observer on the one hand, and a common seaman on the other. The outsider would see the ships—thirteen of them at first, the majority frigates and smaller vessels—drawn up at the Great Nore in two lines, in crescent formation. The only indication of a mutiny that he would notice would be the fluttering of red flags on every ship. But if he stayed for a few

1. *Cunningham*, p. 11. Buckner reported that the surgeon, Safferay, had "died suddenly" (C 327, 16 May).
2. A.S.I. 727, C 346.
3. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 30. "Report of proceedings of last night."
4. Mention is made in the Admiralty Digest for 1797 of several such documents. But nearly all of them were among the "Promiscuous Letters" which are lost.

days in Sheerness, he could not fail to see one of the numerous processions of seamen, arousing no doubt, with their gay uniforms, their scarlet flags and their blaring instruments of brass, the admiration and applause of the less orderly sort of inhabitants, but already causing some alarm in the minds of loyal and respectable citizens.[1]

The seaman who took part in the mutiny would not find his way of life materially altered. He would have the same duties as before, to be performed under the eyes of an elected captain; he would have the same kind of food, for there was no other food in the fleet; and if, in the absence of the regular authorities, he ventured to shirk his duty, or to drink more rum than his constitution could bear with sobriety, the boatswains' mates still wielded the means of correction. Yet, in spite of the discipline and the plain living, there must have been a feeling of exhilaration and freedom among the mutineers. Strict rule, if the subjects assent to it, is one of the highest forms of liberty; and had not every man in the fleet sworn to obey and support the delegates to the utmost of his power? The songs written by the seamen during the mutiny are full of the sense of a newly-found liberty. In one song it is Neptune who calls upon the sailor to shake off the chains of arbitrary power:

> "Your brothers," says he, "his all firmly resolved
> To banish all tyrants, that long did uphold
> Their crewel intentions to scourge when they please.
> Sutch a set of bace villains you must instantly seize."[2]

Another song, written with more literary skill, takes up the story:

> Then at the Nore the lions boldly roused.
> Their brethren's cause at Spithead they espoused.
> Each swore alike to King he would be true,

1. *Cunningham*, p. 12.
2. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 29.

But one and all the tyrants would subdue.
Their gallant hearts the chains of bondage broke
Not to revolt, but to evade the yoke.[1]

It was the general feeling of the seamen that an unjust hierarchy of officers and Lords Commissioners and ministers was defrauding them of their fair wages and preventing them from exercising the rights of citizens of a free country. Probably most of them had a very vague idea of those rights—their nature might be settled by the delegates and the nation. Some, who had acquired the spirit of the Revolution and had read their Paine in hidden places, may have been encouraged by the thought that their cause was the cause of the French and American peoples, and their mutiny a wave in the flowing tide of reform. But the majority only knew that they were supporting the seaman's cause, and answering the summons that was borne by the sea-god from their brethren at Spithead. They mutinied because they believed themselves to be oppressed; but if they were properly treated they would fight with a good heart for their country and their King. What more concise and adequate expression of their views could be found than this note, written on the back of one of their topical songs?

For the Lords Commissioners of the Board of Admiralty.
Dam my eyes if I understand your lingo or long proclamations, but, in short, give us our due at once, and no more of it, till we go in search of the rascals the eneyms of our country.
HENREY LONG.

Nore—of June, 1797. On Board his Magesty Ship *Champion*.[2]

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 35.
2. *Ibid.*, no. 29.

CHAPTER XI.

Richard Parker.

It has been mentioned that each of the ships at the Nore had a committee of twelve men, of whom one acted as president, and as captain of the ship; and that in addition to the "General Committee of Internal Regulations" there was a central board consisting of delegates from all the mutinous ships—two delegates from each ship, according to the precedent set at Spithead. At the head of this hierarchy of delegates was the President, Richard Parker, who acted as admiral of the fleet, except in so far as his authority came not from the Crown, but from the seamen over whom he held command. Parker had only been in the fleet for about six weeks when he became President of the Committee of Delegates, and his election to that office is usually regarded as the chief of the many mysteries connected with the mutiny. It has often been suggested that he was sent into the fleet by some revolutionary society (presumably the United Britons) to arouse discontent and republican feeling among the seamen, and to lead in the organization of the mutiny. But a study of his career shows that it is not necessary to use such a hypothesis in order to explain Parker's election to the presidency. A theory of deep and widespread conspiracy is attractive; but the indications are that Parker won his ill-omened distinction by simple and straightforward means, by virtue of his rank and education rather than the influence of political plotters and their secret agents.

At the time of the mutiny Parker was thirty years old. He was born in Exeter, and educated at the Grammar School there.[1] It is said that his father was a baker and

1. "*Impartial and Authentic Account*"; *D.N.B.*, vol. xliii, p. 268.

corn dealer with a comfortable income, and that Richard Parker himself was first introduced to the building trade. But he had a restless disposition and preferred the excitement of naval life to the monotony of solid industry on shore. The facts of his early training are very obscure. He was cruising as a midshipman in the Channel during the American war. On the second cruise he quarrelled with his captain, whom he challenged to a duel, and on his return he quarrelled with his father.[1] There is a doubtful mention of his sailing in the *Bulldog* sloop to the West Indies.[2] Parker himself afterwards said that he had been a petty officer or acting lieutenant on the *Mediator*, in 1783.[3] In one published account of his life it is said that after the end of the American war he went to Genoa and Leghorn on a merchantman, as master's mate, and that he incited the crew to mutiny because of the bad victuals.[4] Such a story, however, might easily grow from a slender foundation, during the mutiny in which he really did participate. From these dim indications of Parker's early career it may be judged that he had gained a fair knowledge of seamanship, and that if he had been a steady and reliable man he might have become a warrant officer in a responsible position. But he had an unstable and lawless character, and he could not treasure his wealth.

His manner of life and his whereabouts during the ten years of peace that followed the Treaty of Versailles must be left largely to conjecture. In 1791 he was in Scotland, and married the daughter of a farmer who lived at Braemar. Two years later he came again within the purview of history, as an officer of the *Assurance* in

1. "*Impartial and Authentic Account*"; *D.N.B.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. Capts., B 443 (A.S.I. 1517).
4. "*Impartial and Authentic Account.*"

the Channel fleet.[1] He had certainly been out of the navy during the peace, and he probably entered it again as a volunteer on the outbreak of the war. His career on the *Assurance* had an abrupt and characteristic ending. In December 1793 he was court-martialled for refusing to obey a lieutenant, and was disrated. He was sent to serve before the mast among the men over whom he had lately held authority; but—it is a sign that he was not wanting in ability—Parker was transferred to the *Hebe* after two days, at the request of the captain of that ship.[2] Apparently his service on the *Hebe* gave satisfaction.[3] But although he was strong and well-built and in the prime of life, Parker was not a healthy man, and in April 1794 he was attacked with rheumatism so severely that he had to be sent ashore to Haslar. After a month's treatment the surgeons in the hospital deemed him cured, and sent him to Admiral Parker's flagship, the *Royal William*, as a supernumerary. They erred in their judgement, for he was found to be quite unfit for work; and the next day he was back in Haslar. However, in the middle of August he resumed his place on the *Royal William*, and remained there until 26 November. On that day he was sent ashore again, probably for his health, and he never returned to the Channel fleet.[4] He made his way up to Scotland again, and it is said that he became a schoolmaster. His capital was the trifling and tardy wages of the common seaman; his income was the poor remuneration of the unskilled teacher; and he had a thriftless disposition. He fell inevitably into debt, and was consigned to a debtor's prison. And it was only natural that a prisoner who was a capable seaman should

1. Sir Peter Parker to Nepean, 17 June (A.S.I. 1023, A 568). According to *Cunningham* (p. 85) and Mrs. Parker (Pro., p. 23, Digest), he was a master's mate. Cunningham calls the ship the *Resistance*; but Sir Peter Parker is likely to be right, because he had the official papers before him.

2. Parker to Nepean, u.s.

3. *Cunningham* (p. 85) says that he was made a mate of the hold.

4. *Ibid.* Parker's sick ticket is enclosed with the letter in which these particulars are given.

accept the offer of a handsome bounty and the comparative freedom of the life on a ship of war. Parker was released from Perth gaol; received £20 as bounty-money —an amount that covered his debt with a considerable surplus—and was enlisted as a quota-man. On 31 March 1797 he was taken on board a tender at Leith, and a few days later he was entered as a supernumerary on the *Sandwich* at Sheerness. Within six weeks from his departure from Leith he became President of the fleet.

The fact that the mutiny broke out soon after the arrival of its official leader might suggest a causal relation between the two events. And if Parker enlisted in order to produce a mutiny, he must have been the agent of conspirators on land who were working in conjunction with seditious seamen; for it is inconceivable that a single individual who represented no party and had no longer a personal interest in the navy should set himself the task of organizing a revolt in the fleet. But from this conclusion it would follow that the mutiny was in its origin a political contrivance; whereas it admits of a simpler explanation, as an extension of the Spithead mutiny. And reasons can be found for Parker's election that do not involve him in political conspiracy. In the first place, although the original suggestion of a mutiny had possibly come from the *Inflexible* [1] it was natural that the president should be chosen from the crew of the *Sandwich*. It was the flagship; it had a predominating influence in the fleet; and the meetings of the delegates were regularly held there.

The prospect of a mutiny would be altogether agreeable to Parker's restless and violent disposition, and

1. Parker himself said in his defence at the court-martial that the mutiny began on the *Inflexible*, and it is quite likely that he spoke the truth. Many of the *Inflexible's* company were among the most violent of the mutineers, and several of them escaped, or tried to escape, to the Continent in preference to submitting to the constituted authorities. (See below, pp. 243, 244). Spencer wrote on 29 May, (A.S.M. 137) that the crews of the smaller vessels were held in terror by the large ships, "particularly the *Sandwich* and *Inflexible*, the latter of these two being the most violent and desperate."

when the scheme was made known to the ship's company of the *Sandwich*, he would soon become prominent as an ardent supporter of the seamen's cause. But in addition to this enthusiasm, which was not altogether creditable, he had two qualifications of real value, which distinguished him from the rank and file of his fellow-seamen. He was well educated—in respect of handwriting and grammar he was at least as accomplished as many of the admirals of his time,—and although he was only rated as an able seaman he had once been an officer. The fact that he had been broken for disobeying the orders of a superior officer would not lower his reputation among the mutineers: they were all guilty of a similar misdemeanour. Moreover, both as an officer and as a schoolmaster Parker had had experience of controlling other people, though to the end of his days he never succeeded in ruling his own spirit. Probably he was not a born leader of men; but the circumstances mentioned above were enough to give him prominence in the mutiny; and his election might very well be due to the fact that no other delegate was as well qualified to preside over the meetings. Since Parker's sudden promotion can be plausibly explained by means of ascertained facts, it is hardly warrantable to accuse him of political conspiracy unless direct evidence of treason on his part can be found. There is no adequate reason for supposing that he entered the fleet with the intention of helping forward a revolution. It is much more likely that he enlisted in order to clear himself from debt and escape from the limitations of Perth Gaol.[1]

1. Mr. Hannay (vol. ii, p. 371) holds that Parker's character fitted him for membership of a Jacobin Society. Dr. Holland Rose, on the contrary, has found that the members of the "Radical" clubs were usually men of good character, who would not willingly admit such a man as Parker to their circle. I believe that their agents were not always as high-minded as the members themselves. Nevertheless, there is practically no reason for supposing that Parker was connected as an agent or in any other way with the Jacobin societies.

CHAPTER XII.

The Period of Quiescence.

With this short account of the characteristics of the mutiny as a background, the measures of the seamen and their relations with the government may now be examined in detail. The course of the mutiny may be divided into four periods:

(1) (12 to 20 May). The period of comparative quiescence, when the mutiny was kept well under control by the ringleaders, and the Admiralty offered no effective resistance.

(2) (20 to 29 May). The period of negotiation, ending with the return to London of three lords of the Admiralty who had gone to treat with the seamen.

(3) (29 May to 5 June). The climax of the mutiny, when ships from Duncan's squadron joined with the Nore fleet, and the movement which had begun as a strike now bore the appearance of a rebellion.

(4) (5 to 15 June). The decline of the mutiny.

From the very outset there were signs of weakness and disunion in the mutiny. The *Clyde* frigate was under the command of Captain Cunningham, "a good man and excellent officer,"[1] who was popular with his ship's company. The crew joined the mutiny because it was both fashionable and expedient to do so; but their observance of their oath was always half-hearted. One of their delegates, who was a member of the deputation sent to the fleet at Portsmouth, deserted his companions

1. This is the character given to Cunningham by Admiral Page in a pencilled note on p. 123 of his copy of Cunningham's book (now in the British Museum).

on the return journey, and remained on shore.[1] Parker, with good reason, told the first lieutenant of the *Clyde* that he and the captain had too much influence with the crew.[2] The *San Fiorenzo*, a frigate which was under orders to convey the Duke and Duchess of Würtemberg to Germany after their wedding, arrived in the Thames on 13 May. The crew were obedient, and had no wish to join the mutiny. For this reason the court-martial was removed on the 13th from the *Inflexible* to the *San Fiorenzo*. But while the court was sitting, the delegates of the fleet came alongside, to enlist the crew as mutineers. Sir Harry Neale, the captain of the ship, brought the delegates before the court.[3] It is characteristic of their presumption, and it is also a sign of their strength and confidence, that they wanted to take charge of the prisoner themselves. Neale dismissed them from the ship, and they went away quietly. But they had no intention of allowing the *San Fiorenzo* to remain aloof from the mutiny. The *Inflexible* was passing at the time, and to convince the men of the *San Fioranzo* that the delegates were in earnest, a shot was fired across her bows. The new-comers saw that it would be useless to remain obstinate; and they gave three reluctant cheers, and chose their delegates.[4] But as long as the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* remained at the Nore they were centres of reaction, and the spirit which they fostered, prevailing at last, brought about the collapse of the mutiny. Because of the good disposition of their crews and the devotion of the seamen to their officers, both these frigates escaped from the Nore before the end of May.

At first, however, the rebellious faction in the fleet were so strong that they could afford to think lightly of the

1. *Cunningham*, p. 10.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 129. "You and your damn'd Captain have too much the confidence of the ship's company; and I will take you both and hang you; or the *Inflexibles* shall do it."
3. There is a remarkable tribute to the character of Sir Harry Neale in the *Letters of Sir T. B. Martin*, vol. iii, pp. 152-153.
4. *Cunningham*, p. 6.

danger from internal discord. Every day their confidence increased, because the government offered them no resistance, and because the public at Sheerness showed them a favour which was partly genuine, and—it cannot be doubted—partly assumed for expediency.

No striking events occurred during the early days of the mutiny. The delegates were probably busy enough, organizing their campaign, arranging their demonstrations on shore, drafting proclamations and handbills and discovering pretexts for their revolt. By 16 May the new organization must have been nearly complete. The ships were all under the control of the committees and the elected captains, and nearly all the regular officers were on shore or kept in confinement on board as hostages.[1]

On the 14th the party of four delegates set out for Portsmouth, to bring about a co-operation between the fleets at Spithead and the Nore. The men chosen for this mission were MacCarthy, who was afterwards the mutineer captain of the *Pylades*, Atkinson, captain of the forecastle of the *Sandwich*, Hinds, of the *Clyde*, and Hollister, of the *Director*, who was also a member of the expedition that was sent to Yarmouth twelve days later.[2] MacCarthy received two five pound notes for the journey from the central committee. The delegates travelled in plain clothes. They went first to London, where Hollister engaged seats in the Portsmouth coach which started from Charing Cross. According to Atkinson's account of the journey, the rest of the party spent the interval before the departure of the coach in visiting their friends in London. Atkinson himself went to see his daughters in Shadwell, MacCarthy and Hinds paid a visit in Well Close Square. In spite of their disguise they must have been recognizable as seamen, for a press-gang arrested them near Tower Hill. But they invented

1. *Cunningham*, p. 12. Some officers were kept on the ships to discourage the land forces from firing on the fleet. (See also article on Richard Parker, *D.N.B.*, vol. xliii, p. 268).
2. See below, p. 171.

some plausible excuses, and the lieutenant in command of the gang allowed them to go.[1] They reached Portsmouth on the 15th without any further mischance, and they were met on shore by Valentine Joyce, the unofficial leader of the Spithead mutiny. The ceremony of reconciliation that ended the mutiny had begun a few hours before their arrival. They heard the proclamation of pardon read on the *Royal George*,[2] and afterwards they had a short interview with Lord Howe in the Admiral's cabin. Howe said that he had heard nothing of the disturbance at the Nore, and he asked the delegates why they had mutinied. MacCarthy, the spokesman, answered that they wanted the same benefits as those that had been granted at Spithead. In reply, Howe gave them each a copy of the proclamation of pardon, and he handed to MacCarthy another paper which probably contained the terms of agreement with the Channel fleet. This interview ended the business of the delegates, but they extended their leave of absence for another day and used up a large part of their money. MacCarthy and Hollister returned to the Nore with their documents, and Hinds, who was opposed to the mutiny, ran away. Atkinson was left in Portsmouth for the whole week. On the following Sunday he received an order which enabled him to draw £10 from a resident of Portsmouth, and he followed the other two delegates, not very expeditiously, arriving at the Nore on Wednesday, 24th.[3]

In the meantime the attention of the government and public was chiefly occupied with the happy turn of events at Spithead. The *Times*, indeed, on 15 May remarked that there was discontent in the Nore fleet; but no one

1. This incident has a general appearance of improbability; but it was described in Atkinson's evidence after the mutiny (A.S.I. 3685). There could not be any advantage to Atkinson in embellishing the evidence with a story of this kind if it were untrue. Moreover the statement was made under oath, and the binding character of oaths was keenly appreciated by the seamen.

2. See above, p. 80.

3. Atkinson's evidence, Solicitor's Letters, A.S.I. 3685.

had reason to suppose that there would be another rising, when the seamen at Spithead had announced that they were entirely satisfied.[1] So it happened that Admiral Buckner was left to rely largely on his own judgement in dealing with the mutineers. When he reported the first outbreak to the Admiralty, the answer came that he was "to take measures to prevent a fresh outbreak"; [2] and as he was not a strong ruler, his measures were altogether useless. They properly belong, however, to the second period of the mutiny, for they mark the first attempts on the part of the authorities to cope with the new danger.

1. It will be remembered that the final reconciliation between Howe and the squadrons under Bridport and Curtis took place on 15 May.
2. Admiralty Minutes (Digest), 14 May.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Period of Negotiations.

The Admiralty expected—and they had every reason to expect—that the seamen at the Nore would return to their duty, as those of Curtis's squadron had done, when they found that the Spithead mutineers were satisfied. The instructions of the Board to Buckner leave no room for doubt that their policy was based on this opinion. They told him to promise the King's pardon to all who should return to their duty at once; and, "sooner than prevent a complete pacification," to remove the obnoxious officers from their command.[1] The latter injunction was not needed, for the mutineers had taken the matter into their own hands; and, as for the King's pardon, they seem rightly to have judged that they could presume rather longer on the forbearance which his Majesty had lately displayed in a remarkable degree towards his refractory seamen.

The settlement at Spithead gave a new complexion to the Nore mutiny. Probably most of the seamen at the Nore had been persuaded to support the mutiny on the ground that they would so be helping their fellows in the Channel fleet to win fair treatment from the government. But the Spithead mutineers had achieved their object without help, and it was clearly the duty of all the other seamen who had revolted to join with them in their return to duty. The news from Portsmouth must have dealt a blow to the aspirations of the ringleaders at the Nore. The delegates, however—or at least a working majority

1. Admiralty Minutes (Digest), 17 May.

of them—were unwilling to abandon an enterprise which had started with such favourable auspices; and the rest of the seamen had sworn to "be true to the delegates then assembled whilst they continued to support the present cause." Many of the common seamen would have been glad enough to make their peace with the government when they found that everything was settled at Spithead; but they were overruled by those to whom they had given authority. And probably a large number of them had only the vaguest idea of the accommodation that had taken place at Spithead, for it was the policy of the leading delegates to keep their subordinates in ignorance of the measures of the government, and of any events that might tend to check the general enthusiasm for "the cause on which they were embarked." [1] The committee were very displeased with MacCarthy for bringing back the documents from Spithead. It was said that they even spoke of hanging him for disloyalty to the cause.[2] When Atkinson returned to the *Sandwich*, Parker told him that he and the other delegates to the Channel fleet "had bought two or three pennyworth of ballads for twenty pounds." Some seamen of the *Sandwich* told Atkinson that they had seen nothing of the papers from Spithead, and had heard nothing of Howe's compact with the mutineers.[3] In the committee Parker was heard to say that the Act for the increase of pay and provisions was really only an Order in Council; and when he was driven to admit his mistake he explained that the Act would only be in force for one year—"three hundred and sixty-five days and a few hours." [4]

It is important to examine the motives of the ringleaders in deciding to prolong their revolt, for these

1. Cf. their conduct at the end of the mutiny in regard to the King's pardon and the Acts of 6 June; see below, p. 230.
2. Evidence of Bray, Master of the *Sandwich*, at the trial of MacCarthy, A.S.I. 5486.
3. Atkinson's evidence before the magistrates, A.S.I. 3685.
4. Evidence of Ryan, Schoolmaster of the *Sandwich*, at the trial of Gregory and others.

motives show the difference in character and intention between the two mutinies. With some men the chief reason may have been political—a desire to discredit the government, or even the treasonable hope of crippling the naval defence of the country so that one of the numerous plans of invasion might have a better chance of success. Others may have been moved by the thoughtless "spirit of mischief" which is held by some historians to be the main cause of the rising. Everyone who had passed through such a period of upheaval must have been conscious of a feeling of exhilaration, a quickening sense of increased interest in life. The mutineers, used to a hard round of duty, and a plain and comfortless manner of living, varied only with the ugly excitement of battle, must have felt with peculiar keenness that they had chanced upon spacious days; and the thought of an immediate return to the old order, of a sudden end to their intercourse with men on shore and in other ships, of the abandonment of their meetings and processions, and the surrender of their newly-acquired freedom and autonomy would be oppressive and repugnant to their minds.

There are indications that the course of events was further influenced by an emotion in some degree akin to the last—a feeling, namely, of jealousy or rivalry towards the seamen at Spithead. For the greater part of a month these men had defied the authority of the Admiralty and had enjoyed all the pleasures and advantages of self-government. And they had not only gone unpunished; they had won all the concessions that they had seriously demanded; they had been supported by public opinion; they had even contrived to bring four lords of the Admiralty to Portsmouth and had carried on successful negotiations with them; they had heard friendly and pacific words from their old Admiral; their enterprise had ended with a procession through Portsmouth and round the fleet; and, to crown their good

fortune, the delegates were handsomely entertained at the Governor's house. When the seamen of the Channel fleet had been so richly rewarded for their mutiny, why should their brethren at the Nore, after upholding the same cause for a single week, voluntarily submit themselves to the King's mercy, without securing the least benefit or recognition from the government? The desire of the seamen at the Nore to be abreast of the fashion, and not to be outdone by the members of any other fleet, is shown in many of their words and actions, but never more obviously than in their determination to bring the Lords of the Admiralty to Sheerness, so that their enterprise might receive as much official consideration as had been given to the original undertaking at Spithead.[1]

A compound of such motives as these led to the continuance of the Nore mutiny. But some conscientious men, who would not be satisfied with these questionable inducements, may yet have been comforted by the thought that the Spithead mutineers had not gone far enough in their demands. They were in a strong position for bargaining, and might have effected a thorough reform in naval administration, but the opportunity had profited them little by reason of their lukewarmness. The Nore mutineers seemed to mistake for timidity the statesmanlike restraint of the delegates in the Channel fleet; and as they had themselves become the champions of the seaman's cause, they were determined that they would not be backward in demanding redress. The government were apparently cowed, for their only measure of opposition had been the offer of the royal pardon; and they might agree to terms which would enable the oppressed mariner to enjoy his "natural rights" and to exercise the functions of free citizenship.[2]

1. See below, p. 147.

2. *Cunningham* (p. 12) thinks that because the mutiny was in progress for eight days before the statement of demands was sent in "it is reasonable to conclude" that these demands "were only made as a cover for the excesses" which the seamen "had committed, or might

To this end the delegates drew up a project of reforms, in eight clauses, and sent it to Buckner on 20 May. Although none of the demands were allowed by the Admiralty, the project is still of some importance as showing in what direction the seamen looked for an increase in their comfort and liberty. Apparently they were satisfied with the promised reforms in victualling, for they made no mention of food or drink. Three of the clauses are financial, and to the modern understanding they seem reasonable enough. The first is that before a ship put to sea the crew should be paid the arrears of wages due to them, to within six months of the date of sailing. The second, that impressed men, who received no bounty, should have instead two months' wages [1] in advance, so that they might have satisfactory dealings with the slopseller. They could, of course, have their outfit on credit, but the credit price was apt to be exorbitant, and the slopseller often claimed a large proportion of the sum that the sailor swept into his hat from the pay table. On the other hand it might be argued that the pressed men often had outfits already, and would be tempted to spend the money advanced to them in less creditable ways than the purchase of slops.

1. *i.e.*, from £2. 5s. to £2. 10s.

probably be led into." This statement, however, implies that the mutiny was begun without any principle or higher motive than a "spirit of mischief." The implication might be natural to a man in Cunningham's position; but an impartial observer must surely find it hard to believe that several thousand practical men could be persuaded to undertake the risk of a mutiny through pure caprice, and that the demands were entirely devised for the sake of appearances. It is much more likely that most of the seamen at the Nore believed that better terms ought to be exacted from the government. As for the silence of eight days, it should be remembered that the result of the negotiations at Spithead would not be known at the Nore until 17 May at the earliest, and that the news would bring about a change in the policy of the Nore mutineers. As long as the negotiations at Spithead continued the Nore fleet remained mutinous but inarticulate. When the moderation of the terms agreed upon was made known the delegates at the Nore spoke up on their own account. Mr. Hannay (*Saturday Review*, 27 June, 1891) follows Cunningham, in suggesting that the mutineers did not seem to be in earnest, because they waited for eight days before sending in their demands.

The third clause, providing for a more equitable distribution of prize-money, was perfectly reasonable, although it was not allowed by the Admiralty. Even in the unfriendly columns of the *Annual Register* the justice of this claim is admitted, and it is surprising that the Spithead mutineers did not make a serious effort to win the concession.[1] Another financial demand, added later and never communicated to the Admiralty,[2] was that marines should be allowed 10d. a day, clear of all deductions. Presumably it was not understood at the Nore that the wages of the marines had already been raised virtually to this level.

Of the other proposals for reform, one—for leave to go ashore when the ships were in port—seems quite fair, and is a repetition of one of the demands made at Spithead; another, for the revision and modification of the Articles of War, was also justifiable, but it was not to be expected that such a change would be brought about at the instance of the seamen. Two proposals, however, were so aggressive and preposterous that they might well poison the minds of the Admiralty against the more moderate demands. It was suggested in the first place that officers who were evicted for undue severity should not be allowed to return to the ship from which they were expelled, without the consent of the crew; and secondly, that men who deserted and afterwards returned to the navy should receive a free pardon. If through some unimaginable folly or weakness the

1. *Ann. Reg.*, p. 219. Probably they were wise enough to understand that in trying to grasp too many benefits all at once they might run a risk of losing the advantages that they had already secured. The Nore mutineers were not so well balanced in their judgement. There are signs, however, that the seamen of the Channel fleet had not abandoned their intention of working a reform in the distribution of prize-money. Graham, the magistrate, wrote from Portsmouth on 22 May: "I believe to a man almost they are resolved to continue the disturbance on the fleet's return to Spithead upon the ground of prize-money" (A.S.I. 4172). Probably the fate of the ringleaders at the Nore and on the *Pompée* dissuaded them from the attempt.

2. It was one of the additional demands made by the North Sea fleet at the beginning of June. This fleet also demanded the prompt payment of bounties to volunteers.

Admiralty had conceded these two demands, the one would have put the superior officers entirely at the mercy of the seamen, and would have paralysed their authority; the other would have turned the navy into a casual ward.[1] In a later version of the project, a clause was added in the same spirit, that all courts-martial should include a jury of common seamen and marines.[2]

The demand which came first on the list—that all the concessions allowed to the seamen at Spithead should be extended to those at the Nore—was the only one that was not refused, and it had been granted before the Nore mutiny began. We should remember, however, that the terms of agreement at Spithead had not been finally settled when the Nore mutiny broke out; and that the seamen had been taught to regard the government with great suspicion. In all probability they thought that in adding this clause to their demands they were safeguarding themselves against trickery.[3]

The articles relating to expelled officers and to deserters are so different in tone from the rest that it is not easy to account for their inclusion. The other articles might be approved by a great majority of the seamen; but no steady and well-disposed man would wish to deprive the officers permanently of their authority, or to encourage desertion. These two demands must have been inserted by the more violent section of the delegates; and the difference between the two parts of the project seems to reflect the condition of the committee, for dissensions very soon arose among the members.[4] It remains to be

1. Cf. *Ann. Reg.*, p. 219: The demands of the Nore mutineers "aimed at innovations equally dangerous and mortifying to persons in authority, and would have occasioned essential alterations in the discipline and management of the navy."

2. This clause also originated in the North Sea fleet. The proposal was that in the trial of a seaman there should be 9 seamen and 4 marines; and in the trial of a marine, 9 marines and 4 seamen.

3. This explanation seems more reasonable than Cunningham's. He says that this article "was only put in to swell the list" (p. 26).

4. Buckner to Nepean, 24 May. "Some of those who are stiled delegates profess a concern at the state to which things are arrived" (A.S.I. 727).

explained why even the most refractory of the mutineers should wish to include such unpromising articles in an otherwise plausible schedule. Was it, as the writer in the *Annual Register* suggests, that they were "framed with an expectation to be refused"? If it were so, the object of the authors must have been to bring on a crisis, and to enable the fleet as soon as possible to match its strength with that of the government. But the case can be explained in a more likely way. The seamen at the Nore were undoubtedly encouraged by the success of the Spithead mutiny, and probably by misrepresentation in newspapers and handbills, to believe that the government was weak, and unable to offer effective resistance to the mutiny. And it may well be that the men who composed these articles really expected that they might be granted, and that terms could be extorted from the government which would put common seamen practically on a level with the officers in respect of freedom and authority.[1]

1. For the sake of clearness the demands are repeated here in their original order. Those which were sent to Buckner on 20 May were:

(i) The same indulgences should be allowed to the seamen at the Nore as were granted to those at Portsmouth.
(ii) Leave should be granted to go ashore when the ships were in port.
(iii) All ships should receive arrears of pay to six months.
(iv) No officer discharged from a ship should return without the consent of the ship's company.
(v) Two months' pay in advance to pressed men on ships long in commission.
(vi) Pardon for deserters who should return.
(vii) Fair distribution of prize-money.
(viii) Articles of war should be made easier and more moderate.

The following were added by the North Sea fleet:

(i) Trial by jury composed of seamen and marines in courts-martial.
(ii) Tenpence a day for marines.
(iii) Immediate payment of bounties.

They also suggested that three-fifths of the prize-money should go to the petty officers and common seamen, and two-fifths to the higher officers.

The earlier demands are published in *Ann. Reg.* (State Papers, p. 245). They appear, with a commentary, as an Address to the Nation among the papers of the *Repulse* (A.S.I. 727, C 370a, no. 20);

The statement of demands served to open negotiations between the mutineers and the authorities on shore—though the negotiations bore rather the likeness of hostilities. Buckner received the list of demands on his flagship (the *Sandwich*). He went there on 20 May to reason with the delegates, taking with him his own captain, Mosse, and Captain Dixon, of the *Espion*. Their coming was unexpected, and although some attempt was made to man the ship, Buckner was not received with the ceremony and the deference due to an admiral.[1] Parker was not on board when they arrived,[2] and they had been waiting for three hours when at length he came with a few other delegates to meet them on the quarter-deck.[3] Buckner had come with a proclamation of pardon, but Parker answered him by producing the list of grievances.[4] Argument had no effect on the ringleaders. They held to their demands, and said that if any mutineers shrank from their undertaking they would be run up at the yard-arm.[5] Parker had the grace to apologize to Buckner for his very improper reception on board, but as president and quasi-admiral of the fleet, he wore his hat during the interview.

The three officers, seeing that the mutineers were not to be persuaded by reasoning, left the ship, taking with

1. Evidence of Admiral Buckner at Parker's Court-martial (A.S.I. 5486).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Evidence of Captain Dixon.
4. Evidence of Buckner and Dixon.
5. Evidence of Snipe, Surgeon of the *Sandwich*.

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but in this version the eighth article is omitted, and the demands of the North Sea fleet are added. See also *Cunningham*, pp. 23–25.

No. 25 of the papers of the *Repulse* contains the demands of the North Sea fleet alone, with some comments.

It is stated in no. 27 of the papers of the *Repulse* that the "Address to the Nation" had been approved by the committee of delegates.

them the list of grievances—the only fruit of their visit.[1]

Buckner sent the demands to the Admiralty, and on the following day (21 May) they gave him their answer, the only answer that could be expected: Buckner was instructed to tell the crew of the *Sandwich* that the Admiralty would not allow any fresh demands;[2] and he drew up a paper on his instructions. The first article, demanding the privileges that were allowed to the Channel fleet, was set aside because it had already been granted. The rest were refused.[3] Undoubtedly the Admiralty acted wisely in rejecting them. It has been shown already that some of the demands were reasonable in themselves. If they had been put forward in a constitutional way, they might have been allowed without any injury to the naval service. They might even have deserved some consideration if the Nore mutiny had followed the rejection of peaceable petitions, as the Spithead mutiny had done.

1. From the evidence given at Parker's trial it appears that the demands enumerated above were brought to Buckner on the *Sandwich*. The document was dated 20 May, and apparently it was drawn up while the officers were waiting on the quarter-deck; though in all probability the delegates had thoroughly debated the question of their grievances during the previous week. Cunningham gives the date of Buckner's visit as 21 May, but he must be mistaken. If he were right it would be difficult to account for the statement of demands. There would be no point in handing in a copy of a document that had been sent to Buckner on the previous day; and it is most unlikely that the delegates should produce a second and a different list of grievances within twenty-four hours. Moreover there is no trace of any such list in any book or record. Buckner said that his visit to the *Sandwich* took place "on or about the twentieth," and Dixon gave the date definitely as the twentieth. It seems almost certain, therefore, that Buckner went to the *Sandwich* on 20 May, and received the list of demands during his interview with the mutineers.

Dixon referred to the list of demands handed to Buckner as a new list, but he probably used the word "new" to contrast these demands with those of the Spithead mutineers. He also mentioned a second list of grievances, which may be either this same document or the "Final Determination of the Fleet" issued a few days later, and apparently produced at the meeting of the delegates with the Lords of the Admiralty on 29 May.

It should be remarked that Cunningham's chronology of this part of the mutiny is very uncertain.

2. Minutes, 21 May (Digest).

3. *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, pp. 245–247.

But these demands were ushered in by mutiny, and to accept even the most moderate of them would have been equivalent, on the part of the Admiralty, to a recognition of mutiny as a regular means of obtaining redress of grievances.

On 21 May, the day on which the Lords of the Admiralty sent their answer to the seamen, there appeared in Sheerness the first sign of active resistance to the mutiny. Two regiments of militia, under General Fox, came from Canterbury, and took up their quarters in the Sheerness garrison.[1] Buckner was told to adopt forcible measures if the violence of the mutineers made such measures necessary, but he was instructed to allow the mutineers to land and parade about the town so long as their conduct was orderly.[2] He himself admitted three days later that "in general, the behaviour of the seamen while on shore was decent and sober,"[3] and in consequence he was able to assure Parker that there was no hostile intention in the reinforcement of the garrison. Parker, however, saw in the troops the first symptom of danger, and he answered that their coming was "an insult to the peaceable behaviour of the seamen through the fleet at the Nore."[4]

But apart from this half-hearted show of resistance no active measures were taken to cope with the mutiny. Buckner must have been efficient enough in the administration of a regular routine, or he could hardly have risen to the important position that he held at the time of the mutiny, but he had not the resource necessary for meeting with success the unprecedented upheaval in the fleet under his command. His conduct, therefore, seems very weak. He relied almost entirely on the instructions of the Admiralty: the only suggestion that originated

1. *Cunningham*, p. 21; Minutes, 21 May (Digest). *Cunningham* (p. 17) says that there were no military forces in Sheerness before the arrival of Fox. The garrison was composed of invalids.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Buckner to Nepean (A.S.I. 727, C 336), 24 May.
4. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 5 (A.S.I. 727, C 370a).

with him in this part of the mutiny was that new recruits should not be sent to the Nore, and that no ship should be allowed to leave the Thames, "as an accumulation of numbers would unavoidably add to the confusion that now prevails."[1] And the Lords of the Admiralty themselves did not produce any businesslike plan for dealing with the mutiny. They could only point out to the seamen, through Buckner's agency, that the other fleets which had been mutinous were satisfied and had put to sea; and they renewed the offer of pardon which had been conveyed by Buckner on the twentieth.[2] Apparently both Buckner and the Lords of the Admiralty believed that the mere refusal of the demands would be enough to bring the mutiny to an end, and that the offer of pardon would clinch the matter, and would take away all the reluctance that the seamen might otherwise feel in putting themselves at the King's mercy.

The falsity of this impression was soon obvious. It is not clear in what way Buckner conveyed the answer of the Admiralty to the delegates; but whatever the process may have been, its immediate effect was to call forth greater energy and violence on the part of the mutineers. According to a contemporary writer,[3] Buckner had another interview with some of the delegates, and gave them ten minutes in which to decide upon their course of action. Their answer to the message of the Admiralty was definite and practical. They rowed into Sheerness harbour and took away with them the eight gunboats which were lying there. Each boat as it passed from the harbour fired a shot at the fort—a token that from that time forward the mutineers would be the avowed enemies of the government.[4]

1. Buckner to Nepean, 21 May, C 332; the suggestion was approved by the Board (Rough Minutes, 22 May, A.S.M. 137), and an order was given accordingly.
2. Answer to the seamen, 22 May, u.s.
3. *Schomberg*, vol. iii, p. 22.
4. Probably they also meant to show their objection to the reinforcements that had been brought into Sheerness.

It was about this time [1] that the mutineers brought all their ships together at the Great Nore (some had previously been lying at the Little Nore nearer to Sheerness), and ranged them in two crescents, with the newly-acquired gunboats at the flanks. In bringing the fleet together in this way they were following the plan adopted in the second Spithead mutiny, when the ships lying off Portsmouth were taken down to St. Helens.

It now became their definite policy to extort terms from the government by a system of terror. Just as in the French Revolution the interference of Austria and Prussia brought the Jacobins to the front, so in this little rebellion, the opposition of the authorities enabled the most violent of the mutineers to dominate their fellows. The issues of surrender or open hostility were clearly before them, and in the crisis the mass of the seamen were readily persuaded by the advocates of strong and heroic measures. As an evidence of the change in their attitude, the seamen, on 22 May, struck Buckner's flag, which had been flying at the mainmast head, and hoisted the red flag in its place.[2]

Parker came on shore to inform the Admiral of this event, and a curious incident took place at their meeting. Buckner was inquiring into the case of two marines who had been arrested in Sheerness for drunkenness, when the trial was interrupted by the arrival of Parker and several other delegates. The intruders told Buckner that he no longer had authority over the prisoners, and, in spite of his protests, they took away the marines to be tried in the fleet. Those who were present at this dispute

1. 24 May, according to Cunningham. Buckner also mentioned the new disposition of the ships in a letter dated 24 May (A.S.I. 727, C 337).

2. Parker said at his court-martial that the proposal to strike Buckner's flag came from the *Inflexible*, and that he was forced to give the order against his own wish.

said that Parker behaved in a most insolent manner, and assured Buckner that he was not to be intimidated.[1]

The mutineers were much irritated by the flat refusal of the Admiralty to comply with any of their demands. The natural disposition of the ringleaders, encouraged by the early success of their enterprise, and stimulated, perhaps, by the infiltration of revolutionary ideas, had aroused in the seamen an inflated estimate of their own importance. They believed that they would become so formidable that the Admiralty must of necessity show them as much consideration as had been shown to the seamen at Spithead. They did not like to deal with Buckner alone; they would not accept a pardon from him;[2] and they clamoured for a deputation from the Admiralty. On 22 May Parker had written in a letter to Buckner:

> The Lords of the Admiralty have been remiss in their duty in not attending when their appearance would have given satisfaction.

And he added that no accommodation could take place until their arrival.[3] The Lords of the Admiralty, however, had given an answer which was intended to be final, and they saw no use in going to Sheerness to enter into a discussion with the seamen when they had nothing

1. Evidence of Buckner and Captain Dixon at Parker's trial; *Cunningham*, pp. 21, 22. Both Buckner and Dixon said that the incident happened on 23 May. *Cunningham* (p. 23) assigns it to the twenty-first. He suggests that the success of the mutineers on this occasion may have encouraged them to publish their list of demands. This is careless on his part, for even according to his own showing the demands had already been sent in. He must have written his account of this part of the mutiny from a confused recollection, without checking the dates. Cunningham was present at the interview, and he says that Parker's insolence made him so angry that he would have killed the mutineer if Captain Blackwood, of the *Brilliant*, had not intervened. Buckner said in his evidence that Parker was accompanied by Davis, the mutineer who acted as captain of the *Sandwich*, and three or four others.

2. Buckner to Nepean, 24 May (A.S.I. 727, C 336): "All are clamorous to have the pardon notified to them in a more solemn manner than they conceive the notification of it by me would impress it with (at least, I am inclined to think that is their idea)."

3. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 5.

to discuss. They sent a letter to Buckner on 24 May, to say that they would not go, and the letter was sent on to Parker.[1] Still the mutineers persisted in their determination to bring some members of the Board to Sheerness. They pressed the demand upon Sir Harry Neale, the captain of the *San Fiorenzo*, when he met them in the town next day;[2] and, in answer to the letter from the Admiralty, Parker repeated to Captain Mosse that "no accommodation could take place until the appearance of the Lords of the Admiralty at the Nore."[3] The letter was received in the fleet "with very great dissatisfaction," and the temper of the mutineers became more disagreeable. As Buckner said, they appeared "hourly to assume more confidence and act with more decision."[4] The situation was not improved by a message sent by semaphore from the Admiralty, repeating the statement that order was restored in all the other fleets.[5] On the contrary, Buckner had every reason to feel "infinite concern" and to express a "doubt of a return of order among the seamen and marines at this port."[6] He found that the delegates had decided to adopt the plan of blockading the Thames and the Medway;[7] and any hope of security that the public on shore may have entertained must have been dashed by the appearance in Long Reach on 24 May of a cutter from the *Sandwich*[8] and on the 26th of armed boats from the *Iris* and the *Brilliant*. The men in these boats

1. Minutes, 24 May; *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, pp. 247, 248.
2. Buckner to Nepean, 25 May (A.S.I. 727, C 339).
3. With Buckner's dispatch (A.S.I. 727, C 339). See also *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, p. 248. It should be observed that the anxiety of the mutineers to have an audience with the Lords of the Admiralty might not be altogether due to vanity. There might be some hope of winning the favour of the authorities by a personal interview. In London they were at a safe distance, but if they came to Sheerness the grievances of the seamen might be impressed on them much more forcibly.
4. Buckner to Nepean, 25 May (C 339).
5. On 26 May.
6. 24 May, C 336.
7. 25 May, C 339.
8. Scott's evidence at the trial of Hockless and others (A.S.I. 5486).

landed at Gravesend, and public opinion had turned so strongly against the seamen that those who came ashore were arrested by some of the townspeople. They contrived, however, to make their escape, and took to their boats again. The object of their expedition was to extend the scope of the mutiny by securing the alliance of the *Lancaster*, the *Neptune*,[1] the *Naiad*, and the *Agincourt*, which were lying in Long Reach.[2] They were so far successful that in spite of firing from the fort at Tilbury, they persuaded the crew of the *Lancaster* to mutiny and to send delegates to the Nore; but the crew of the *Naiad* refused to join them.[3] On the next day (27 May) another party of delegates tried to reach the *Lancaster*, first in gunboats and then in fishing-smacks. But they were prevented by the firing of guns at Tilbury.[4]

On the 28th a fourth expedition was sent up the river. A lieutenant of the impress service in Tilbury saw a smack which kept curiously clear of the other traffic. He went on board and succeeded, not without some risk, in arresting two seamen who were below, armed with pistols. Finding them to be mutineers from the Nore, the lieutenant sent them to be imprisoned in Chatham, and they were ultimately brought to trial.[5]

The situation of the officers in Sheerness was growing more and more serious every day. Buckner and the

1. The *Neptune* about this time was put under the command of Sir Erasmus Gower, who had retired from the *Triumph* at Spithead during the second mutiny.

2. *Cunningham*, p. 33; Buckner's dispatch of 26 May, C 340; Colonel Nesbit's letter from Tilbury, 27 May (War Office, Digest); Capts. D 34 (Digest). See also Nepean's letters of 26 and 27 May (A.S.O 1352, pp. 96–98). Parker went on board the *Clyde* to ask for volunteers for the expedition up the river, but no one would go. A fierce argument followed between Parker and the ship's company, who were led by the first lieutenant. The scene ended with the departure of Parker and the return of Cunningham, the captain. Captain Blackwood, of the *Brilliant*, and Captain Surridge, of the *Iris*, returned to their ships at the same time.

3. Capts. D 35 (Digest).

4. Capts. D 36; Nesbit, 28 May (War Office, Digest).

5. Evidence of Lieutenant Daniel against Wolf (A.S.I. 5486).

captains who had come ashore with him were doubtless doing their utmost to bring the mutiny to an end, but their efforts were futile. They held frequent meetings; they offered the King's pardon to those who would submit; they took every opportunity to impress upon the mutineers the advisability of surrender, and the wickedness of remaining obdurate. But they had no more forcible means of persuasion. The military who crowded the garrison could only be used for defence; the Nore was out of range of the guns of Sheerness; the naval officers themselves had lost all their authority over the men; and there were no ships in the river ready to oppose the mutinous fleet. All the aggression had been on the part of the mutineers, and the handful of officers on shore who were responsible for the suppression of the rising were wholly unable to check it. Not only were the ringleaders growing in assurance and daring; the fleet itself was also increasing in numbers. In addition to the *Lancaster* and the gun-boats that had been taken from the harbour, the *Serapis* store-ship, and various other frigates and smaller vessels had joined the mutiny, either by choice or by compulsion.[1]

It was evidently beyond the power of the regular officers to suppress the mutiny, and the time had come for the interference of some higher authority. The ministry must have been watching the development of the Nore mutiny with increasing concern. Ten days had gone by since the Channel fleet put to sea, yet there seemed less likelihood than ever of a settlement at the Nore. An important meeting of the Cabinet was held on 27 May. At this meeting it was decided that the most rapid way of bringing the mutiny to an end would be to comply with the demands of the seamen to the extent of

1. Buckner to Nepean, 26 May (A.S.I. 727, C 340); I suppose that the following vessels are among those that joined the mutinous fleet about this time; they were none of them with the fleet at the beginning of the mutiny, they were all at the Nore in the early part of June, and none of them belonged to Duncan's squadron: *Proserpine*, frigate; *Pylades*, sloop; *Comet*, fire-ship; *Discovery*, bomb.

sending a deputation from the Board of Admiralty to Sheerness.[1] The purpose of the deputation, however, was not to negotiate for the redress of grievances. They were sent down with a definite mandate in the form of a royal proclamation.[2] In the preamble to this document the various misdemeanours of the seamen were set forth: persistent mutiny; firing on other ships to compel their submission;[3] blockading the mouth of the Thames;[4] and keeping back two frigates from the duty assigned to them.[5] For the rest, there was no mention of concessions, but only the promise of pardon for those who should surrender and of punishment for those who should not.

Spencer, Arden, Young and Marsden, the members of the Board who had gone to Portsmouth at the time of the first mutiny, were chosen for the unwelcome duty of visiting Sheerness. They left London on the evening of 27 May—only a few hours after the meeting of the Cabinet. They spent the night at Rochester, and arrived at Sheerness the next morning. Commissioner Hartwell's house was made their head-quarters. The Commissioner

1. Memorandum of Cabinet, 27 May (A.S.I. 4172). The grounds of the decision were not given, but conceivably it was thought that the public would thus be satisfied that the authorities were paying due attention to the seamen; that the mutineers themselves could no longer complain that their case was neglected; and that the Lords of the Admiralty would be better able to devise plans for the suppression of the mutiny if they were to examine the conditions for themselves. The event proved the wisdom of the ministers' decision.

On 24 May the Board had refused to send a deputation to Sheerness (A.S.M. 137). It may be supposed that the sudden reversal of their intention was due to the intervention of the Cabinet.

2. The original proclamation is to be found with the memorandum of the Cabinet in the volume of Secretary of State's letters (A.S.I. 4172). It is reprinted in *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, pp. 248-249.

3. This charge refers to the shots fired from the *Inflexible* at the *San Fiorenzo*. I have not found any record of firing on other ships before 27 May.

4. The accusation of blockading the river is not quite correct. Certainly the mutiny had interfered considerably with the shipping, and many merchant vessels were held up for the want of a convoy (see Buckner's dispatch 26 May, C 340); the mutineers had threatened, moreover, to carry out a blockade; but the threat was not actually put into practice until 2 June (see below, p. 181).

5. The reference here is to the *San Fiorenzo* and the *Clyde*, which were under orders to take the Duke and Duchess of Würtemberg to Cuxhaven.

himself and Admiral Buckner acted as their agents in the negotiation with the seamen. The Board fell to work as promptly as they had done at Portsmouth. Their first business was to hear reports from Buckner and several captains. The reports showed that on the whole the large ships were the most mutinous, and the frigates and smaller vessels were inclined to surrender. Copies of the royal proclamation were distributed to the captains to be read on their ships.[1]

The delegates, of course, knew that the Lords of the Admiralty had come to Sheerness. In the evening they went on shore in great numbers, and gathered at the door of Hartwell's house. They asked to be allowed to see the members of the Board, and wanted to know whether they were the same members as those who had gone to Portsmouth. They also demanded that the Board should meet on the *Sandwich*. But an answer was sent by Buckner that the delegates could only be admitted to an interview if they came to make their surrender and to ask for pardon. It was rightly judged that if an interview were allowed on any other terms, "a discussion might take place which might be highly derogatory to the dignity of the Board." In any case a discussion could not have any good effect. The Lords of the Admiralty could only assure the seamen that their grievances were already redressed as far as they could be; and that assurance had been made many times by the officers, and was repeated in the royal proclamation.

The delegates retired for a short time to discuss the negative answer of the Board. On their return they told Buckner that they would not insist on an interview. Only one other communication passed between the two parties on that evening. The loyal frigate *Niger* was threatened by a gunboat in the harbour. Buckner informed the delegates that if any shots were fired at

1. The remarkable effect produced by the royal proclamation is mentioned below (p. 157).

the *Niger* the Board would exclude from the pardon every man on the gunboat. Parker, who always led the delegates, made a low bow, and the seamen returned quietly to the Nore.[1]

The Board were not satisfied with their day's work. Apparently they had some hope at first that their presence at Sheerness and the promise of pardon would appease the mutineers; but the delegates had shown no sign of a desire to submit. The disappointment of the Board appears in their letters. Spencer wrote on the following morning: "I am sorry I cannot yet give you such a report as I could wish of the state of things here; indeed, it is such at present that I have but very slender hopes of its taking a good turn."[2] And his regret was echoed by Marsden: "I am sorry to say that things do not this morning wear much more the appearance of settlement."[3]

Captain Mosse had spent the night on board the *Sandwich*, and he had taken with him this message from the Board:

> Captain Mosse to inform the ship's company of the *Sandwich* that their Lordships expect to hear by noon to-morrow that the crews of the ships at the Nore have accepted his Majesty's most gracious pardon and have returned to the regular discharge of their duty.[4]

In reality they had no expectation of hearing such good news. As it happened, the morning of the 29th was stormy, and there was no communication at all between the fleet and the shore. But in the early afternoon the wind fell, and at two o'clock a couple of delegates came to the Commissioner's house. They asked what terms had been granted to the mutineers at Portsmouth. As an answer they were given copies of the documents relating to the Spithead mutiny, and they

1. Spencer to Nepean, 29 May (Sheerness), A.S.M. 137.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Marsden to Nepean, 29 May (Sheerness, 9 a.m.), A.S.M. 137.
4. A.S.M. 137, 28 May.

"appeared very thankful for this attention." They must have belonged to the more moderate party in the fleet; and it may be supposed that they were trying to effect a compromise.[1] Later in the afternoon a large company of delegates arrived, and announced that they would insist on their demands. A note was sent to them in reply. They withdrew—presumably to one of the public houses in which they were accustomed to meet—and spent an hour in discussing the note. At the end of the hour a single delegate brought a letter to Spencer, informing him that the question of surrender had been put to the vote, and that a majority of the delegates were in favour of continuing the mutiny. Evidently the voting was not unanimous; in all probability there were many others, besides the two delegates who had first come ashore in the afternoon, who would have been glad to surrender while they still had the assurance of a full pardon.

In the evening Parker came again to Hartwell's house and asked for an answer to the letter. He was told that there was no answer. With another low bow he went away. The delegates returned to their boats; and now, for the first time since the arrival of the Board in Sheerness, a red flag was carried before them.[2] There was indeed no answer to be made to the decision of the delegates. It was clear that they would "own no argument but force." The Lords of the Admiralty saw that they could do no good by staying longer in Sheerness. They left the town on the same evening, spent the night again in Rochester, and reached London

1. One of the two was John Davis, who was chosen to be the mutineer-captain of the *Sandwich*, but seems, from the evidence at his court-martial, to have been far more moderate than most of the ring-leaders. See particularly the evidence of Commissioner Hartwell at Davis's trial.

2. Previously, "their behaviour was quiet and orderly: every man's hat was decorated with red or pink ribbon, but there was no huzzaing or musick or any other sort of parade or noise" (Spencer to Nepean, Rochester, 29 May).

on the 30th at midday.[1] Apparently they had accomplished nothing, but in reality their visit had most important results.

To the mutineers themselves the negotiations which they had demanded with such insistence brought great disadvantage: to the authorities at Sheerness, to the government, and the nation as a whole it was an incalculable gain. It was, in fact, a turning-point in the mutiny; for at this time the Admiralty decided upon the policy of active opposition which finally forced the whole fleet to surrender. The disorder, indeed, lasted for more than a fortnight longer; but when the repressive measures of the Admiralty came into force the failure of the mutiny was determined.

Since the mutineers were definitely debarred from all hope of voluntary concessions on the part of the government, their only chance of success lay in the co-operation of the army and the public on shore. But the allegiance of the army had been secured only a few days before by a general increase of wages; and this visit of the Lords of the Admiralty once for all alienated public sympathy from the mutineers. Before the visit there seemed to be a suspicion in the minds of many people that the seamen were not receiving a due share of consideration from the government. But now the Lords Commissioners had come in person to Sheerness, "showing the whole inhabitants," as Sir Charles Grey said, "how desirous government were to set the misguided seamen right, and to bring them back to a just and proper sense of their duty and allegiance."[2] Their offer of an amnesty had been rejected, and the mutineers had treated the members of the Board with disrespect. Popular feeling in Sheerness turned so completely in favour of the authori-

1. This account of the visit of the Board to Sheerness is taken from their report in the Rough Minutes (A.S.M. 137) and from the letters of Marsden and Spencer to Nepean, written from Sheerness and Rochester. The letters cover practically the same ground as the report. They are quoted in full in the appendix.

2. Grey to Dundas, 25 June (A.S.I. 4172).

ties that Sir Charles Grey was able to write: "I am sure they (the public) would have hung every man that came on shore, had they had their will."[1]

With the public in such a mood and a soldiery of a loyal turn of mind, the authorities in Sheerness, led by Grey, who commanded the garrison, were able to prevent the mutineers from landing, and to cut them off from communication with the shore. They also stopped the supplies with which the seamen had apparently been furnished down to this time, in spite of the mutiny. In addition to these comparatively peaceful measures, the ministry and the Admiralty had agreed that if such a step became advisable, as a last resort they would call in the North Sea fleet to suppress the mutiny by force.[2]

There was, however, this objection to the use of forcible methods against the mutineers: that many of the officers were detained on the ships as hostages,[3] and any violence on the part of the authorities would be very dangerous to these unfortunate men. In the note from the Cabinet it was provided that if it were found necessary to give battle, the officers should first be removed; but it is difficult to see how they could be removed except by force of arms.

These hostile preparations and the mere fact that the Lords of the Admiralty had returned in disgust to London, took effect, not only among the citizens and the soldiery on shore, but also among the seamen them-

1. Grey to Dundas, 25 June (A.S.I. 4172).

2. A.S.M. 137, 27 May. It was known that there had been some discontent in the North Sea fleet, and Duncan was instructed to use the most reliable part of his squadron for this service: "To place that part of your squadron which may eventually be called upon to act, in such a situation that their Lordships' commands may reach you without any material delay, and to leave a fast sailing vessel in Yarmouth to follow you therewith to such rendezvous as you may fix upon for the purpose." (For a further account of Duncan's squadron, see below.)

3. There can be no doubt that the confinement of officers as hostages was part of the deliberate policy of the delegates; *e.g.*, in the "Final Determinations of the Fleet" it was stated that Captain Lock, of the *Inspector* sloop would be held as a hostage for four seamen of the *Inspector*, who had been arrested in the Humber (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 36).

selves. Although the delegates had good reason to expect that relief would come to them by sea, on the landward side they were virtually beleaguered, since they were unable to go on shore themselves, and no supplies were sent to them. The situation of the mutineers began to be uncomfortable, and their outlook was unpromising. Moreover the fleet contained a large proportion of men who were well affected towards the King and the constitution. These men saw that the mutiny had no support from the government. The issue came clearly before them, that they must either surrender or persist in a hostility to the government which would amount to treason.

One of the most striking results of the Admiralty's visit was the effect produced by the royal proclamation. It was read on the *Clyde*, the *San Fiorenzo*, the *Brilliant*, the *Iris*, the *Pylades* and the *Firm*, on the *Espion* and *Niger* in Sheerness harbour, and on the store-ship *Grampus*. Shortly after the reading of the proclamation an attempt was made on every one of these ships to bring down the red flag and secede from the mutiny.[1] On the *Brilliant*, the *Iris* and the *Grampus* there were struggles between the mutinous and loyal parties, which ended in favour of the rebellious faction.[2] But on the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* the loyalists were in a great majority.[3] The white flag was hoisted on these ships, and was only brought down again when the *Clyde* was threatened with

1. See Report of the Board at Sheerness u.s. The committees of the other ships would not allow the proclamation to be read. The fact that it was read on the ships mentioned above shows that they already contained strong parties of loyalists. The proclamation would make clear to the crews the attitude of the government and the danger of persisting in the mutiny; and it evidently confirmed their inclination to surrender. The fact that the captains of the *Brilliant* and *Iris* had returned to their ships may help to explain the reading of the proclamation on those frigates.

2. *Cunningham*, pp. 38, 39.

3. When Parker went on board the *Clyde* to ask for volunteers for the purpose of bringing down the *Lancaster*, only three men out of the whole ship's company supported him. The Lords of the Admiralty expected that the mutineers would liberate the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* "when the purpose for which those two ships were intended should be known" (A.S.M. 137, 24 May).

a broadside from the *Inflexible*. The crews of both frigates prepared to escape from the fleet, but they were detained by a message from some seamen of the *Director*, to the effect that the crew of that ship were anxious to accompany them. The loyal seamen on the *Director*, however, were not strong enough to carry out the plan of escape, and, after a struggle, they were forced to abandon their enterprise.

On 30 May, in the small hours of the morning, the cables of the *Clyde* were cut, and the frigate drifted away from the fleet on the flood tide. When she had drifted far enough, the sails were loosened, and she made the harbour in safety at sunrise. A great crowd of people, mainly soldiers, welcomed her crew as they came to land. The *San Fiorenzo* also escaped, but did not fare quite so well. Bardo, the mate of the Admiralty yacht, had gone on board during the night to act as pilot. She missed the flood tide and had to wait until noon. Bardo put a spring on her cable, but cut the cable too soon, when the vessel was heading down the river. The wind, which was then blowing from the W.N.W., carried her through the middle of the fleet, and several ships opened fire on her. Happily, their marksmanship was not deadly, and she escaped with only a slight damage to the rigging. She put in on the coast of Essex, eight miles from the Nore, and eventually, after being piloted past the Goodwin Sands by another ship, made her way to Portsmouth, accompanied by a French privateer which she had taken on the voyage.[1]

The royal proclamation and the visit of the Admiralty, by influencing many of the seamen to desert or resist the mutiny, were only encouraging a tendency which had been apparent from the very beginning of the disorder.

1. The escape of these two frigates is important, for it was the first sign of the collapse of the Nore mutiny; but it is hardly mentioned in the official reports, and I have had to fall back on Cunningham as the sole authority for the above description (see *Cunningham*, pp. 43–48). On 5 June orders were given for the repair and provisioning of the *San Fiorenzo* at Spithead (Ord. and Instr., A.S.O. 231, p. 135).

It will be remembered that the crews of the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* were forced to join a movement which they did not approve. As long as they remained with the fleet they served as the nucleus of opposition to the mutiny. It seems probable that the attempted defection of the *Brilliant* and the *Iris* was due to their influence, for the four frigates were stationed together at the Little Nore for several days, and communication among them would be very easy.[1] Another centre of reaction was the transport vessel *Serapis*, which arrived at the Nore from Lisbon on 24 May, and was included in the mutiny against the wish of the crew, who were only hired for the voyage. Two days later, Buckner reported that the companies of the *Espion* and the *Niger*—the frigates which were being refitted in the harbour—were loyal.[2] It was at this time (26 May) that the *Clyde* refused to go up the river at Parker's invitation; and the delegates were so uneasy in regard to the intentions of these too loyal seamen, that they brought the *Pylades* sloop into a position between the *Clyde* and *San Fiorenzo*.[3]

1. *Cunningham* mentions (p. 27) that they were together there on 23 May, when the gunboats were being removed from Sheerness harbour. The fact that Parker chose men from these frigates to go up the river and bring down the *Lancaster* seems to suggest that he was acting on a definite policy. They were probably suspect, and he may have wished to test their adherence to the mutiny. Or he may have wanted to commit them to some definite act of mutiny in order to ensure their whole-hearted support of the seamen's cause—on the principle of the terrorists in France, who held that a good revolutionary was one who would be sent to execution if the monarchy were restored.

2. A.S.I. 727, C 340. Some of the *Niger's* crew early in the mutiny gave evidence of their loyalty, by helping to rescue Lieutenant Thompson, of the *Niger*, who had been arrested in Sheerness by the delegates, and was being tried before an improvised court in one of the public houses (*Cunningham*, p. 14, 18 May).

3. *Cunningham*, p. 32. It is remarkable that the *Pylades* should have been chosen for this duty, because she was one of the ships on which the white flag was hoisted two days later. Possibly the crew, instead of keeping the others in subjection, were influenced by their loyalty. In the notes on the conduct of the crew, made by Keith after their submission, it is said that "the ship's company were impressed with fear and acted contrary to their inclination" (C 373b). In a note to no. 6 of the papers of the *Inflexible* (A.S.M. 137) the *Pylades* is described as one of the most violently mutinous of all the ships at the Nore; but it seems that the violence was largely due to Charles MacCarthy, of the *Sandwich*, who acted as the captain of the *Pylades* during the mutiny (see letter from Captain Mackenzie, of the *Pylades*, 18 June, C 397).

Even among the leaders of the mutiny there was a lack of unanimity, for some the delegates, who had probably entered upon the mutiny in good faith, to encourage their fellow-seamen at Spithead, early "professed a concern at the state to which things were arrived," and only feigned a zeal for the cause for fear of retribution at the hands of their colleagues.[1] Similar evidence was given by Lieutenant Watson, the commander of the *Leith* tender, who arrived at the Nore about the end of May. He was ordered to be quiet when he tried to persuade some of the mutineers to return to their duty, but several delegates followed him, "declaring in the strongest terms their regret at the situation to which they had reduced themselves." It seemed to him that the majority of the seamen were opposed to the mutiny, and were only prevented by terror from deserting it. Naturally, he was taken into the confidence of the loyal faction, and he learnt that a plot had been formed for the overthrow of the delegates; but that the conspiracy had broken down.[2]

On the morning after his arrival, the tender was surrounded by armed boats, containing delegates. The tender's company were given the choice of joining the mutiny or being sunk. The crew remained loyal, but Watson advised them to mutiny for their own safety. They were invited to give evidence against Watson. None was forthcoming, however, and Parker himself, who had come to the Nore a few weeks before in the same tender, spoke in favour of Watson. The tender, with great difficulty, was brought away from the Nore on 2 June. The crew were loyal throughout their visit to the fleet, and the volunteers on board, though at first they were inclined to support the mutiny, later became "perfectly disgusted" with the conduct of the delegates.

1. 24 May, C 336.
2. A.S.I. 1517 (Captain's Letters B). Evidence of Lieut. Watson, sent by Captain Brenton, commanding officer at Leith. Watson started on 24 May and was off Yarmouth on the 29th, so that he probably arrived at the Nore on the 30th, in the evening.

It will be remembered, too, that in their dealings with the Board in Sheerness the delegates were not by any means unanimous.[1] According to Cunningham, they received a further rebuff on 29 May. Parker sounded the crew of the *Sandwich* as to their intention of carrying on or abandoning the mutiny. When he put the question to them, the answer came from every part of the ship, "Give it up! give it up!" [2] And in a private letter to Nepean, Marsden wrote (29 May) that many of the mutineers were already wavering.

It seemed indeed, at the end of May, as if the mutiny were bound to collapse within a few days. The seamen were not in a position to bring the government to terms, and the flat refusal of the Admiralty to enter into negotiations left them only two courses of action: either they must yield, and accept the pardon which had been promised them; or they must escape from the Thames and repair to some friendly[3] port, at which they could find a refuge and supplies. But many of the mutineers, probably a large majority of them, had no wish to desert the naval service altogether and turn traitor, and to such men the King's pardon would be far more attractive than a voluntary exile.

If the Nore fleet had been left alone, in all probability the seamen would have chosen the easier and more peaceful alternative, the mutiny would have ended almost immediately, and no retribution would have followed its decline. But at the end of May, when the collapse of the mutiny seemed imminent, a sudden outbreak in another fleet gave fresh hope to the refractory and dissatisfied

1. See above, p. 154.

2. *Cunningham*, p. 133, note 1. Cunningham derived this information from an eye-witness, Benjamin Rutland, acting master of the *Nancy* tender. If the story is true it seems to be a further indication that Parker was not the most violent of the mutineers. A man who was really determined to carry on the mutiny to the last extremity would not have referred his policy to a mass meeting.

3. *i.e.*, foreign or Irish, or perhaps American.

section of the seamen, and the spirit of revolt blazed out again with unexampled fury.

As the *San Fiorenzo* was making her escape on 29 May, she met a number of ships coming towards the Thames mouth, with red flags at the masthead. For safety, her own red flag was kept flying, and she cheered the other ships as they passed.[1] Three of them were seen, too, off Yarmouth, by the men on the *Leith* tender, and it was discovered that they belonged to the North Sea fleet and that their crews had refused to go with Duncan to watch the mouth of the Texel.[2]

1. *Cunningham*, p. 51.
2. Evidence of Lieut. Watson, u.s.

BOOK IV.

The Nore Mutiny

Part II.

CHAPTER XIV.

The North Sea Fleet.

Admiral Duncan had a general control over the whole fleet in the North Sea, but the squadron under his direct command was at Yarmouth and was preparing to sail to a station near the Texel. The squadron consisted of thirteen ships of the line, two frigates, and two sloops.[1] Duncan sailed near the end of May, but in the next few days the whole squadron, except two ships of the line and one frigate, deserted him and went to the Nore. Their arrival more than doubled the strength of the rebellious force and marked the beginning of the third and most dangerous phase of the mutiny. It led, indeed, to the most violent and serious outburst of disorder that has ever troubled the course of naval administration.

It has already been mentioned that on 1 May the crew of the *Venerable*, Admiral Duncan's flagship, gathered in a mutinous manner in the forecastle, and gave as the reason of their action a suspicion that the government and the Admiralty intended to break their agreement with the seamen at Spithead. Duncan persuaded them that the authorities were dealing honestly, and they returned to their duty. This incident, however, was a sign that the spirit of restlessness and discontent had spread to the North Sea fleet. It is clear that the seamen at Yarmouth were eagerly following the course of the negotiations between their

1. The names of the ships were: *Venerable* (74), Duncan's flagship; *Adamant* (74), Onslow's flagship; *Montague* (74); *Monmouth* (74); *Agamemnon* (64); *Ardent* (64); *Belliqueux* (64); *Lion* (64); *Nassau* (64); *Repulse* (64); *Standard* (64); *Isis* (50); *Leopard* (50); *Glatton*, *Vestal* (frigates); *Hound*, *Inspector* (sloops). In the North Sea fleet vessels of fifty guns were used as ships of the line. The *Nassau* was ordered to remain in port for the crew to be paid, and the *Vestal* was sent to the mouth of the Thames. Duncan intended to take the rest of the fleet with him to the Texel.

"worthy companions" at Spithead, and the Board of Admiralty; for only five days before they had sent to the Admiralty a letter of thanks for their promise of reforms, a letter of extravagant expressions of loyalty.[1] Now, probably owing to letters from the Channel fleet, they began to feel suspicious of the intentions of their masters, and showed a disposition to join with the malcontents at Portsmouth in safeguarding the cause of the seamen. Again on 12 May, the day of the outbreak at the Nore, there was some trouble in Duncan's squadron, but it was calmed by the officers, who threatened to fire if their crews remained disorderly.[2]

The reasons for these shows of discontent are not far to seek. The causes that influenced the mutineers at the Nore were also at work in Yarmouth. The underlying cause was the consciousness of grievances unredressed. The immediate occasion was the fear that the government would try to escape from their obligation to remedy the grievances. And the fear was undoubtedly increased by the circulation of newspapers and handbills hostile to the government.

But at the time Duncan and his officers did not regard these murmurings as serious or threatening. The seamen were usually well-behaved, and Duncan was convinced of their loyalty. When copies of the Act of 9 May had been distributed among them, he wrote that the crews were "perfectly satisfied and orderly," and added that without doubt they would remain so—a prophecy on

1. "The seamen of the North Sea fleet beg leave to return their grateful thanks to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for their ready compliance with the humble request of their worthy companions in the Channel fleet. At the same time, to convince their Lordships of our united and steady support of his Majesty and our country, we will at all times risk everything that is dear to man.—Have only to regret from the situation of the enemy we are opposed to, it has not been in our power to shew the nation we want to do our duty and honour to our country and worthy Commander-in-Chief" (*Belfast News Letter*, 5 May). Addresses of this sort were sometimes used as a cloak for mutinous intentions, but I conceive that the authors of this document wrote it with honesty.

2. *Times*, 15 May.

which the fates exercised to the full their gift of irony.[1] Again, when he heard the news that the Spithead mutiny had subsided, he wrote with the utmost confidence to Nepean: "I have great pleasure in assuring you that the squadron under my command is perfectly orderly and quiet."[2] And only four days before the outbreak of mutiny at Yarmouth he added: "Much harmony is in this fleet, which I really think has helped to keep us right."[3]

As the condition of Duncan's squadron was apparently so satisfactory, it occurred to the Lords of the Admiralty that his ships might possibly be of service in suppressing the disorder at the Nore.[4] The members of the Board were themselves inclined to look upon the mutineers as criminals, inspired by motives of sheer malignity and lawlessness; and perhaps the intensity of their own feelings blinded them to the possibility that men who were not filled with the spirit of rebellion might yet have some sympathy with the objects of the insurgents. It would have been a dangerous policy to order even the most loyal body of seamen to oppose a movement intended for their own advantage, unless they had actually volunteered for the services. Nevertheless, such a plan was one of the first expedients devised for the suppression of the Nore mutiny; for as early as 23 May Duncan wrote, evidently in answer to a question from the Admiralty, that he would be reluctant to set his seamen to the work of opposing the mutineers, because it "would subject them to a disagreeable jealousy from all other parts of the fleet who engaged in this unhappy business."[5] But since he was a fearless and conscien-

1. A.S.I. 524, F 125 (11 May).
2. *Ibid.*, 15 May, F 129.
3. *Ibid.*, 23 May, F 139.
4. Minutes, 26 May (Digest).
5. The letter to which Duncan's note is an answer is not preserved in the secret letters of the Board. It may have been a private communication from Spencer. Duncan's private letters to Spencer have been kept by Spencer's descendants, and have been used by Lord Camperdown in his "Life of Duncan"; but the letters from Spencer to Duncan were destroyed by fire.

tious man, he added: "For all that, I do not shrink from the business if it cannot otherwise be got the better of." [1]

In spite of Duncan's reluctance, it was believed at the Admiralty that it might be necessary to bring his fleet into action. The Board were perhaps encouraged by his willingness to serve in an extremity, and by the fact that he advocated strong measures in dealing with the mutineers. "I hear," he wrote, "the people from the ships at Sheerness go ashore in numbers and play the devil. Why are there not groups to lay hold of them and secure all the boats that come from them? As to the *Sandwich*, you should get her cut adrift in the night and let her go on the sands, that the scoundrels may drown; for until some example is made they will not stop. God bless you, and send us better times; not that I despair. This chastisement is sent us for a warning to mend our ways." [2]

At a meeting held on 26 May the Board decided to ask Duncan again whether his fleet could be trusted to undertake the work.[3] The letter written in accordance with their minute was very cautiously expressed.[4] But they were evidently impressed with the idea that a conflict between the two fleets might be the only means of avoiding a disastrous surrender to the mutineers. On the 27th definite instructions were sent to Duncan, to prepare the more reliable part of his squadron for service against the Nore fleet;[5] and Spencer wrote two days later from Sheerness: "I return you Duncan's letters, which

1. F 139.
2. *Ibid.* It may be remarked that in this advice there is the first suggestion of cutting off the mutineers from communication with the shore—the expedient that finally proved successful.
3. A.S.M. 137.
4. "Whether, in the event of being reduced to the necessity of resorting to extremities, you have reason to think that the crews of the ships of your squadron can be depended upon, should they be called upon to act for the purpose of reducing the crews of the ships at the Nore to a state of submission." Nepean to Duncan, 26 May, A.S.O. 1352 (Secret Letters), p. 95.
5. A.S.M. 137. For the text of these instructions, see above, p. 156, n. 2.

are very unpleasant; but bad as they are, I fear we must come to that issue at last."[1] Duncan made haste to carry out his unwelcome instructions. He weighed anchor on 27 May, intending to sail to a rendezvous between ten and fifteen leagues to the west of the Texel.[2] But it happened in his squadron as it had happened at Spithead and St. Helens, that at the prospect of putting to sea, the whole fleet broke into mutiny.

Although Duncan and his officers had not the least suspicion beforehand of the misfortune that was coming upon them, there was in fact some slight forewarning of the mutiny. In addition to the little disputes in the first half of the month, there had been some trouble on the *Nassau*. The crew had not been paid for nineteen months, and they sent a petition to Duncan asking that they might be paid before they put to sea.[3] On 21 May they were ordered to go to the Nore to receive their wages, though they were naturally kept waiting at Yarmouth in the hope that the Nore mutiny would subside.[4] Five days later some delegates from the Nore came to Yarmouth in the *Cygnet* cutter.[5] There is no

1. Spencer to Nepean (Sheerness), 29 May, A.S.M. 137.
2. F 146, 147. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 25) gives the date of sailing wrongly as 26 May; *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 423) gives it as the 29th. *Clowes* (vol. iv, p. 173) has copied Schomberg's mistake.
3. F 133. On 26 May Onslow moved his flag to the *Adamant*, because it was intended that the *Nassau* should stay behind to be paid (F 146).
4. F 136.
5. F 147a (27 May). *Neale* (p. 203) says that the *Cygnet* sloop went with delegates to Yarmouth. Presumably he is confusing the *Cygnet* cutter and the *Swan* sloop. The *Cygnet* was provided with two pilots on 26 May (evidence of Bray, Master of the *Sandwich*, A.S.I. 3685). The fact that the lieutenant in command of the *Cygnet* had been sent ashore on the previous day (25 May) suggests that the crew were preparing for this voyage (Buckner to Nepean, A.S.I. 727, C 340). They were not, however, very zealous mutineers, for on 5 June they escaped to Feversham, and surrendered their boat. Two days later Lieut. Caspal manned the *Cygnet* and took it to the Thames mouth (Pro. B 14a, Digest). He was employed in holding up and examining all boats that came from the Nore (A.S.I. 2807, Lieuts. C, 28). The *Cygnet* thus did service both to the supporters and the opponents of the mutiny. In the note enclosed with F 151 it is said that Duncan was forewarned of the approach of 18 delegates from the Nore in the *Cygnet* cutter.

record to show by what authority they had come, but it may safely be concluded that they had been deputed by the central committee to ask for the support of the seamen at Yarmouth. Another cutter, the *Rose*, encountered the *Cygnet*, and all the delegates were captured except three, who made their escape to the shore. Shortly afterwards these three delegates went to Lieutenant Reddy, of the *Hope* lugger, with a letter which, according to their account, they had received from the crews of the Yarmouth fleet. It was stated in the letter that the seamen at Yarmouth were satisfied with the concessions already made by the Admiralty. The delegates professed themselves of the same mind, and promised to do their part in bringing back the Nore mutineers to their duty. On the strength of this promise they were sent back to the Nore.[1]

The mutiny in Duncan's squadron must have broken out almost immediately after their departure. How came it, then, that they seemed to be convinced of the loyalty of the Yarmouth fleet, and announced their intention of opposing the mutiny at the Nore?

It seems most probable that the letter and the declarations of loyalty were parts of a successful ruse, that the delegates were whole-hearted mutineers, and that, forewarned of the impending outbreak at Yarmouth, they disguised their real character in order to escape from the grasp of the authorities.[2] If they had remained in Yarmouth they would almost certainly have been

1. F 149 (28 May). Duncan does not give the exact time at which this incident took place, but it must have happened on the 27th, just before the outbreak of the mutiny. Seeing that the *Cygnet* was back at the Nore before 5 June it seems probable that the delegates were sent back in their own boat; and it may be supposed that the whole party—not only the three who had escaped—were allowed to go, on condition that they would help to subdue the Nore mutiny.

2. Nevertheless there is still a possibility that the delegates and the authors of the letter were acting honestly. Some of the delegates at the Nore were certainly opposed to the continuance of the mutiny; and many of the seamen at Yarmouth were loyal. But after their experience in the case of Hinds (see above, p. 132), the committee at the Nore would probably be careful to choose reliable men to act as their agents in such a mission as this.

punished as fomenters of the mutiny. As for the letter which they produced, if it was not written in good faith, it may have been composed with an evil intention by representatives from some of the ships at Yarmouth; or the delegates may have forged it themselves. Or again, their policy may have been directed by advisers on shore. Democrats were particularly rife in this part of England, and the delegates would find many friends in Yarmouth who would be glad to help forward the project of mutiny. [1] In any case it would serve the double purpose of adding to the plausibility of the delegates' story, and of blinding the officers in Duncan's fleet to the real intentions of the seamen.

This deputation was not the first that had gone from the Nore to the North Sea fleet. On the day of the *Cygnet's* arrival at Yarmouth the Admiralty sent word to Duncan that four of the Nore mutineers had been negotiating with his seamen, and had "succeeded to their expectations."[2] It is probably this same expedition which is mentioned in the papers of the *Champion* (no. 32), and the papers of the *Inflexible* (no. 15). It is said in these papers that Hollister, Richardson, and Ryan went to Yarmouth, and mention is made of their "partial success." Possibly the visit of the *Cygnet* was due to the fact that the success of the previous expedition had only been partial. Matthew Hollister, a seaman of the *Director*, was imprisoned after the mutiny, and gave evidence against Parker at the court-martial. He had been one of the four delegates who were sent to Portsmouth at the beginning of the Nore mutiny.[3] It would seem, therefore, that the party in the *Cygnet* had come to continue negotiations—perhaps to hasten the outbreak

1. I am indebted to Dr. Holland Rose for this suggestion. In *William Pitt and the Great War*, pp. 181, 186, he shows that in Norwich alone there were thirty "radical" clubs.

2. A.S.M. 137, 26 May. See also Nepean's letters to Duncan, 25 and 26 May, A.S.O. 1352, pp. 93–95.

3. Evidence from the *Director*, A.S.I. 727, C 380. He is called "Holiston" in this paper.

of the mutiny, and to encourage the men of the North Sea fleet to repair with all speed to the Nore and restore the failing fortune of the insurrection. The deputations from the Nore were answered by a similar expedition from Yarmouth. The delegates on this occasion probably settled the final agreement between the two fleets. But the authorities never learnt any details of the expedition: their only knowledge of it came from evidence in a court-martial after the mutiny.[1]

It has been suggested[2] that the unrest which led to the Nore mutiny first arose in the North Sea fleet. The *Inflexible*, in which the plan of the mutiny apparently originated, belonged to the fleet, but apart from this fact the only indications that would support the supposition are two outbreaks at Yarmouth in the early part of May. There is greater reason to suppose that the North Sea fleet revolted in order to support the Nore mutiny, just as the Nore fleet in the first instance mutinied for the benefit of the seamen at Spithead. If the crews at Yarmouth were the earlier offenders, they would surely have mutinied while the rising at the Nore was still in its full vigour; for a combined revolt is far more effective than a sporadic mutiny, which can be crushed in detail.

The ballad-writers at the Nore, who ought to be acquainted with the origin of their mutiny, held that the disaffection spread from Spithead to the Nore, and from the Nore to Yarmouth. In one song the responsibility for the North Sea mutiny, and for all the others, is attributed to Neptune. In his address at the Nore the immortal conspirator is represented as offering this advice:

> Away, tell your Brothers, near Yarmouth they lie,
> To embark in the cause they will never deny.
> Their hearts are all good, their like lyons I say;
> I've furnished there minds and they all will obey.[3]

1. Evidence of Bowers at the trial of Thomas Starling, of the *Leopard*, A.S.I. 5486.
2. By *Cunningham*, p. 85.
3. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 29.

The furnishing of their minds was actually done by the four delegates who "succeeded to their expectations," and the advice of the god was carried out by the occupants of the *Cygnet* cutter.

Another writer contends that Neptune himself went on the mission to the North Sea fleet:

> In Yarmouth next old Neptune reared his head,
> " Awake, my sons," the watery monarch said,
> " The torpid vapours from your souls remove;
> Inspire yourselves with true fraternal love.
> Unto the Nore repair without delay;
> There join your brothers with a loud Huzza."[1]

Whether the seamen at the Nore were incited by members of the Yarmouth fleet, or, as seems more probable, the defection of Duncan's squadron was due to appeals from the Nore mutineers for support in their undertaking, it is at least clear that there was collusion between the two fleets during the latter half of May, and that as a result of the negotiations the ships stationed at Yarmouth, instead of sailing with Duncan to the Texel, threw in their lot with the mutinous fleet at the Nore.

The familiar story of the outbreak need not be repeated here in detail.[2] The essential facts are that Duncan was left with only one ship, the *Adamant*, beside his own flagship; and that the rest of the fleet which should have accompanied him to the Texel went instead to add fresh vigour to the mutiny at the Nore. It was apparently on

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 35.

2. The standard authority for the mutiny in the North Sea fleet is *Brenton*, who was at the time a lieutenant on the *Agamemnon*. Duncan's dispatches contain very little news of the event. In fact he did not see much of the mutiny, for nearly all his ships deserted him; and he probably refrained from reporting all that he did see because he underestimated the seriousness of the outbreak. Perhaps a proper sense of humility prevented him from describing his own remarkable efforts in opposition to the mutineers. There is a good account of the mutiny at Yarmouth in Lord Camperdown's *Life of Admiral Duncan*. Lord Camperdown's information is taken very largely from the original letters.

27 May,[1] before the squadron sailed, that the crew of the flagship, *Venerable*, broke into mutiny. With the help of the marines under Major Trollope, and by virtue of his own extraordinary courage and force of character, Duncan subdued both this rising and a similar show of discontent among the crew of the *Adamant*. When once the disorder on these two ships was suppressed the crews became perfectly obedient, and throughout the summer and autumn of 1797 they displayed the utmost loyalty to their commander-in-chief. The blockade of the Texel by the *Venerable* and the *Adamant* is one of the most celebrated incidents of the Revolutionary War. If Duncan had been able to visit all the ships in his squadron he would almost certainly have restored order on the majority of them; and in all probability the mutinies as a whole would have been much less serious if any considerable number of the senior officers had been gifted as he was with the rare capacity for "manly resistance to mutineers," which St. Vincent described as "the most meretorious of all military services." Duncan had to be prepared in the first place to undertake the suppression of the Nore mutiny; then to combat an insurrection in his own squadron; and lastly, with only two ships, to prevent the Dutch and French forces in the Texel from invading England. It is difficult fully to appreciate the courage and address that he displayed in these circumstances of extreme danger and responsibility.

It probably seemed to Duncan that the trouble in his fleet was past when the *Venerable* and the *Adamant* returned to their duty. But in fact the rest of the ships were at the point of mutiny. When Duncan gave the order to weigh on 27 May the *Nassau* and the *Montague* stayed in the harbour. The crews refused to sail until they had been paid, although in the case of the

1. *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 421) gives the date as Sunday, 27 May, and says that the fleet sailed on the following day. As a matter of fact the 28th was a Sunday, and the fleet sailed on the 27th.

Montague the wages were only overdue by one month.[1] Duncan anchored six leagues from the shore and waited for these two ships.[2] But while he was waiting, news was brought to him of mutinies on the *Belliqueux* and the *Lion*. He immediately gave the order to weigh, but the *Belliqueux* signalled inability,[3] and returned to Yarmouth. The *Lion* and the *Standard* had already turned back.[4] Their crews explained that they were going "to redress their grievances."[5] The defection of the *Belliqueux* was, indeed, the signal for a general mutiny. The *Monmouth* and the *Repulse* went with her to Yarmouth;[6] the *Leopard*, the *Ardent*, and the *Isis* followed; and at length the *Agamemnon*, although the majority of her company were opposed to the mutiny,[7] and the *Glatton*, with her crew of "a remarkable loyal and good character"[8] deserted the Commander-in-Chief.[9]

1. It is not clear whether Duncan had arranged that the *Nassau* should be paid at Yarmouth or should accompany him to the Texel and return to the Nore for payment when the mutiny was done. The fact that he waited for the *Nassau* suggests the second case; but on the previous day (26 May, F 146) he had written to say that the *Nassau* would probably stay at Yarmouth. He added that the *Standard* was likely to stay behind as well in order to be paid—an indication of the discontented state of the seamen.

2. *Brenton* says (p. 422) that the fleet was becalmed.

3. 28 May, F 150.

4. F 151.

5. *Brenton*, u.s. The defection of the *Belliqueux* and the *Standard* is mentioned by Brenton, but he says nothing of the *Lion*.

6. F 153.

7. *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 283 (ed. 1837). He says that the mutiny on the *Agamemnon* might easily have been suppressed. If the captain (Fancourt) had behaved with firmness all the officers and most of the crew would have supported him. But although he was in many respects an admirable officer, his conduct on this occasion was remarkably weak.

8. F 151, note written apparently by Captain Bligh, who carried Duncan's dispatches.

9. The dates of these desertions are rather troublesome. It would seem that the *Belliqueux* mutinied on the 28th. Brenton put this mutiny a day later than the outbreak on the *Venerable*. He also says that the crew of the *Venerable* mutinied on a Sunday, and Sunday was the 28th. But the defection of the *Belliqueux* could not take place on the next day, for Duncan reported it on the 28th. It must have happened, therefore, on the 27th or the 28th. On the whole, considering that both the mutiny and the order to weigh would be more likely to come in the morning than late in the evening, and that after the return to duty of the *Venerable* and the *Adamant* (Brenton says that they mutinied at 4 p.m.) Duncan sailed six leagues and waited for the two

For several days the two flagships, the *Venerable* and the *Adamant* were the only representatives of the North Sea fleet, and apparently the only security against a Dutch invasion. However, Duncan was not left long without reinforcements. On 1 June, as soon as the calamity was known at the Admiralty, the *Sans Pareil* and the *Russell*, two loyal ships remaining in Yarmouth, were ordered to join him, and they set sail on the 5th.[1] Sir Roger Curtis had orders to follow with six ships of the Channel fleet.[2] He started on the 4th, but met with a strong east wind,[3] and according to Cunningham, did not reach Duncan's station until the 10th. One of the ships that accompanied Curtis was the *Glatton*, the frigate which had deserted Duncan only a few days before. The crew had returned to their duty, and instead of going to the Nore had sailed to Portsmouth.[4] From the 13th to the 25th Duncan's position was further

1. A.S.O. 1352, p. 110. *Cunningham* (p. 112) says that they went from Portsmouth; but on 4 June Pasley reported them at Yarmouth "in perfect discipline" (A.S.I. 727, C 356).
2. A.S.O. 1352, p. 112.
3. *Dropmore Papers*, vol ii, p. 328.
4. *Cunningham*, u.s

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ships that were in Yarmouth, it seems likely that the *Belliqueux* mutinied on the 28th. For some reason—possibly an agreement with the *Repulse* and the *Monmouth*—the crew waited for a long time before they returned to Yarmouth. Duncan reported that the *Lion* and the *Standard* had gone on the 29th; but he did not mention the sailing of the *Belliqueux* until the 30th. Brenton says that by noon on the 29th all the ships except the *Adamant*, the *Agamemnon* and the *Glatton* had deserted, and that the last two ships turned back at 1 p.m. How is it then that Duncan did not mention their desertion in his dispatch of the 30th? Probably the *Agamemnon* actually returned on the 30th. The difficulty could be explained in this way: The ships remaining with Duncan after he had written his report on the 29th were: *Leopard*, *Ardent*, *Isis*, *Agamemnon*, *Glatton* and *Adamant*. He seems to have written his dispatch of the 30th in the morning, before the first three of the above ships left him. At noon, as Brenton says, only two ships besides the *Adamant* and the *Venerable* remained with Duncan; and after dinner these two deserted. Apparently Brenton remembered that the mutiny on the *Venerable* took place on the 27th; but he was confused by his impression that the 27th was a Sunday; so that in this way all his calculations are thrown wrong by one day. It will be remembered that he was similarly confused in regard to the date of Easter Sunday.

strengthened by the presence of Admiral Mackaroff with five Russian ships. Early in June Spencer had made or adopted the suggestion of asking for help from Mackaroff, and Grenville obtained leave from the Russian ambassador, Count Woronzoff.[1] With the coming of these different reinforcements the worst period of anxiety for Duncan himself, and for the government and the people on shore, was ended. But in the meantime the ships which had lately composed the greater part of Duncan's squadron had gone to the Nore, and by the unfortunate zeal of their crews in a mistaken cause had changed the failing mutiny into the most disastrous and formidable of all the disorders of this troubled year.

The *Montague*, which had remained at Yarmouth when Duncan sailed, was the first ship to go to the Nore. On 29 May she had already started.[2] Other ships followed closely after her. The *Vestal*, which Duncan had sent, by order of the Admiralty, to prevent vessels from entering the mouth of the Thames,[3] herself joined the mutiny. The *Nassau*, which had stayed in the harbour with the *Montague*; the *Belliqueux*, the *Lion* and the *Standard*, the ships that first deserted Duncan when he cast anchor; the *Repulse* and the *Inspector* sloop—all these vessels on or about 31 May, came to the Nore with red flags flying,[4] and it was this flotilla of mutinous ships that witnessed the escape of the *San Fiorenzo*. Their appearance did not cause any immediate alarm among the public on shore because it was supposed that the ships had only to come to Sheerness to be paid.[5] But Buckner, who was better informed, fully realized the danger, and feared that because of "the great increase in the

1. *Dropmore Papers*, u.s. In his letters to the Admiralty Duncan referred with gratitude to the usefulness of the Russian squadron (F 162, 13 June; F 165, 21 June).
2. F 151.
3. A.S.M. 118, p. 93, 25 May; F 146, 26 May.
4. *Cunningham*, p. 53.
5. *Morning Chronicle*, 2 June.

mutinous force," it might not be expedient to try to cut off the mutineers from all communication with the shore.[1]

The *Monmouth* and the *Hound* sloop arrived a day or two later;[2] and at length the rest of the Yarmouth fleet—the *Agamemnon*, the *Ardent*,[3] the *Leopard*, the *Isis*, and the *Ranger* sloop arrived in the early morning of 6 June.

It has already been shown in general why the seamen at Yarmouth mutinied and came to the Nore. It would be interesting to know as well what the individual seamen, of various persuasions and characters, supposed to be their object in coming. Some possibly welcomed the opportunity of mutiny on political grounds; some lawless persons might be glad simply to break loose from authority. These two classes would include the prime movers of the mutiny. Other seamen, a majority on some ships, were opposed to the enterprise. They had no desire to desert their Admiral; and they only allowed themselves to be taken to the Nore because no leader came forward to bring them into combination, whereas the active mutineers were an organized and determined body.[5] Probably the greater part of the seamen had only the vaguest idea of their purpose in joining the mutiny. They would form a "centre" party, acting on no definite principle, but spurred on by the novelty of the event, urged by the example of the zealous mutineers, and

1. C 347, 31 May.

2. The *Hound* was at the Nore on 2 June. See Captain Wood's evidence at Parker's court-martial (A.S.I. 5486).

3. The crew of the *Ardent* had sent delegates to the Nore on 30 May. The delgates returned on 4 June, and the *Ardent* sailed on the 5th (evidence of First Lieutenant Young, A.S.I. 3685).

4. They heard the guns firing at the *Serapis* as they came near to the Nore. The *Serapis* escaped at about midnight 5–6 June. See *Brenton*, vol. i. p. 426.

5. *E.g.*, on the *Agamemnon*. *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 283, ed. 1837) says that the master-at-arms told him that most of the seamen and all the marines favoured the officers. In all probability the rising could easily have been suppressed and the ship taken to the Texel if only the captain had resisted the mutineers. Yet the *Agamemnon* was allowed to go to the Nore, and remained there in a state of mutiny until 13 June.

conscious in a general way that they were upholding with some heroism the cause of the British seamen, and supporting the praiseworthy efforts of their brethren at the Nore.

Their opinion is reflected in a letter sent by the committee of the *Repulse* to the delegates of the whole fleet, in answer to a message of thanks to the crew of the *Repulse* for lending their countenance and support to the mutiny. The reply of the ship's committee is as follows:

> Dr B(rothers),
>
> I have to inform you that the Commt. of this Ship is impress with the most sensible feelling of Gratitude on being 'formed by two of our Committee of your entire approbation of our conduct, in a cause which will never be erased from the minds of our Brother Tars. We, the Commitee, are determined not to be influenc'd by the artful insinuations of our oppressors, nor be appeased untill our grieveance which has been too long standing is comply'd with.
>
> I remain,
>
> Dr Brothers,
>
> Your sincer . . . .[1]

Here is the common outcry against the oppressor in high places—an oppressor so distant that the seamen could revile him and accuse him of treachery without fear of counter-argument or denial. And here is brought to light the shapeless generalization "our grievance," an agglomeration of all the vague discontent and vindictiveness that culminated in the mutiny. It is true that the delegates from Yarmouth contrived a few fresh clauses, to be added to the list of demands previously drawn up at the Nore. But most of the seamen in Duncan's fleet who had any heart in the mutiny undoubtedly had only a general impression that they were treated unfairly, and

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 5. The original is a rough draft on the back of a punishment list. In addition to the verbal message conveyed by the two delegates of the ship, a letter of thanks was written by Parker—probably a circular letter sent to all the ships of the North Sea fleet (Papers of the *Repulse* no. 37, 31 May).

that the revolt which they had joined was intended to remedy the fault.

Although as a means of reform the mutiny proved useless, the arrival of the North Sea fleet greatly increased its strength and danger as a mere revolt. The mutineers at the Nore must have been elated at the accession to their numbers. Their movement had been at the verge of failure; but its decline was checked by the coming of the North Sea ships, and the leaders at the Nore felt a fresh hope that they might at length bring the government to terms.

Every rebellion that is not either immediately successful or immediately suppressed tends to degenerate into lawlessness and purposeless violence. The administration that holds sway in ordinary times is in abeyance. Those to whom the rebels have given temporary authority may grow tired of their unusual responsibility, or may fail under the strain. In the general confusion persons of a criminal disposition find an opportunity for acts of theft and violence that have no connexion with the object of the revolt. And those who are not subdued by opposition resort more and more to desperate measures. Such a tendency, based only on the fear of opposition, appeared at Spithead; but happily the brutalizing process was checked by the action of Parliament and the intervention of Lord Howe.

At the Nore, however, it was known that the authorities would resist the mutiny. The Lords of the Admiralty had refused all terms except unconditional surrender. The seamen had been cut off from all communication with the shore, and additional forces of soldiery had been brought to Sheerness. Those of the seamen who were peaceably inclined wished after the return of the Admiralty to submit, and accept the royal pardon. The more determined mutineers saw that they could only succeed by crushing the opposition. Thus there was practically open hostility between the seamen and the

government. The mutiny had reached this stage at the time when the insurgent forces were strengthened by the arrival of the North Sea fleet. And the effect of the reinforcement was naturally to prolong and embitter the revolt.

The insolence of the delegates at their interview with the Admiralty was probably due to the prospect of help from Yarmouth. They would hardly have shown such a confident demeanour if they had had no hope of other support than the doubtful allegiance of the small fleet under their command.[1]

The increase in the mutinous forces had further the more practical result of enabling the delegates to carry out a blockade of the Thames. It has been said already that they had been planning a blockade, and that they were accused in the royal proclamation of giving effect to their plans.[2] In reality the blockade did not begin until several ships of the North Sea fleet had arrived. An official order for the detention of all ships except those carrying perishable cargoes and those provided with a pass signed by Parker, was issued by the central committee of delegates on 2 June.[3] From the point of view of the delegates the policy of blockade was undoubtedly wise. The other policies which they might have chosen —to remain idle, to attack Sheerness, or to escape to another country,—were all open to objection. Many of the seamen were wavering in their allegiance to the delegates, and they must be put to some active work if they were to be prevented from seceding outright from the mutiny. So mere inactivity was dangerous. A direct attack on the garrison might have been successful

1. In the letter from Rochester on 29 May (A.S.M. 137) Marsden wrote: "The people at the Nore have certainly been encouraged to hold out by the prospect of assistance from the disaffected of Duncan's squadron. They knew as well as we did that some ships were left at Yarmouth."

2. See above, p. 151.

3. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 31. Another copy was enclosed with Buckner's letter, C 378, A.S.I. 727.

if the army had been disloyal; but the mutineers must have known that the forces in Sheerness would offer a strong resistance. The issue of a battle might well be against the fleet; and a single defeat would ruin the cause of the seamen, and seal the fate of the ringleaders. Moreover if the less zealous mutineers took part in such a battle at all, they would almost certainly fight on the side of the government. Even if the mutineers were successful in the enterprise, the victory might not bring them any advantage, for they could not follow it up with a campaign on land. In all probability the only result would be a rising of the whole countryside against them. The third plan was more feasible; it would ensure the safety of the ringleaders and it would weaken the country by the loss of an important fleet. But a large section of the mutineers, including some of the delegates, would vigorously oppose any attempt to combine either with the Irish rebels or with a foreign enemy.

An effective blockade, on the other hand, was not such a violent measure that it would alienate the half-hearted mutineers, yet it was an act of hostility which would increase the seriousness of the mutiny. The promoters of the blockade probably expected that the public on shore, and particularly the tradespeople, incommoded and alarmed by the new measures of aggression, would call on the government to end the mutiny by yielding to the demands of the seamen. Their policy is clearly shown by a statement of Jephson, the Irishman, that "they would get what they asked, or all London would be an uproar by Saturday night."[1]

The delegates were most anxious to capture and plunder victualling ships coming out from Deptford. Their anger was kindled against the Lords of the Admiralty because the supplies from Sheerness had been stopped; and by holding up the storeships they could at

1. Swanston's evidence at Jephson's court-martial, A.S.I. 5486. For further particulars of Jephson's conduct, see below, p. 321.

the same time have their revenge, and relieve themselves of a very serious difficulty.

It appears that the *Swan* sloop was first deputed to hold up the merchant vessels, and that she was joined later by the *Brilliant* frigate and two ships from Duncan's squadron, the *Inspector* sloop and the *Standard*, a battleship of 50 guns.[1] But these four ships alone could not possibly stop the entire traffic of a busy river. It is clear that the whole fleet was concerned in the blockade; in fact, it was not until several ships-of-war from Yarmouth had arrived that the delegates felt themselves in a position to put the system of blockade into practice.[2] The ships of the line were anchored across the mouth of the Thames at intervals of about half-a-mile, so that every vessel entering or leaving the river had to come within range of their guns.[3] It would be an easy matter for the *Standard* and the *Brilliant* and the two sloops, with the support of such a battle array, to stop merchant ships and fishing boats, or even armed transports.

Their efforts met with a measure of success which must have surprised and embarrassed the delegates. Within four days more than a hundred merchant vessels were collected at the Nore, and other ships were still sailing into the trap.[4] It was clear that the captives would soon be both an encumbrance and a danger to the captors.

1. *Cunningham*, pp. 56, 57. The *Swan* was first put to the work alone. But the merchant vessels were coming in so fast that the *Swan* had not time to visit them all. In consequence the other three ships were sent out to help her.

2. Cunningham himself, although he says that the four ships were employed in stopping the merchantmen, allows that the blockade was made possible by the arrival of Duncan's squadron. It seems that the order to carry out the blockade was sent to the whole fleet, for the *Repulse* received a copy (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 31); and this ship was actively engaged in the work. A note asking that two smacks might be allowed to pass was sent to Parker from the *Repulse* on 5 June (no. 32). The order for abandoning the blockade was found among the papers of the *Champion* (no. 15) and of the *Inflexible* (no. 32). If the strength of the mutinous fleet had not been increased the difficulty would have been not so much to stop the merchantmen as to keep them at the Nore when they had been stopped. A small fleet would not find it easy to prevent escapes by night.

3. *Schomberg*, vol. iii, p. 24.

4. Buckner to Nepean, C 359, A.S.I. 727.

On 5 June Parker gave an order that all the merchant vessels should be allowed to pass, and only victualling ships should be detained.[1] The suggestion of this virtual abandonment of the blockade came from Baikie, the purser of the *Inflexible*.[2] The reason given in Parker's order was that the release of the merchant vessels would create a favourable impression on shore. But a still more favourable impression would have prevailed if there had been no blockade at all. The real reason of the order was most probably that the mutineers were unable to cope with the huge mercantile flotilla, and were afraid, in fact, that they might be overwhelmed by this monster of their creation. So, after 5 June, private vessels with very few exceptions were allowed to pass unmolested. But still the mutineers regarded naval storeships as their legitimate prey. They had already secured the *Serapis*, though as it had discharged its cargo at Lisbon it could not provide them with much more than a number of sick men and a few reluctant recruits. The *Grampus* was a more useful possession. This ship was apparently well stocked with supplies, and some of the mutinous vessels were able to replenish their stores from her cargo.[3] The *Maria*, a victualling ship

1. Papers of the *Champion* and the *Inflexible*, u.s.

2. *Daniel Price's Pocket-Book*, 6 and 13 (A.S.M. 137). The merchantmen that had been stopped before 5 June were allowed to go on the 10th, probably because their supplies were failing. *Schomberg* says that the Thames was re-opened on 10 June; but it was practically free for shipping after the 5th. The suggestion that merchant vessels should be released was also made by a man named Blake, who acted as captain of the *Inflexible* during the mutiny (*D. Price's Pocket-Book*, no. 5, 10 June).

3. The date at which the *Grampus* joined the mutiny is not clear. It may have been at the Nore from the beginning. Buckner mentioned its presence in the mutinous fleet on 16 May (C 329). The proclamation of pardon was read on the *Grampus* and a white flag was run up. But the flag was brought down after a struggle between the two factions on board, and Spencer did not include the *Grampus* in his list of friendly ships (*Cunningham*, p. 39; Report of Board at Sheerness; Spencer to Nepean, Sheerness, 29 May, A.S.M. 137). The *Grampus* was one of the twenty mutinous ships named in the proclamation of 10 June. There must have been several determined mutineers on board, for five of the crew were condemned to death (see official list of mutineers, A.S.M. 137). No other men from a ship of less than 50 guns

which had started from the Thames with supplies for Lisbon, just before the news of the blockade was known in London, was one of the first ships to be detained by the mutineers.[1] There is no indication that any other storeships were captured, and the absence of such prizes may have been a further inducement to the delegates to abandon the blockade. When the fate of the *Maria* was known at the Admiralty, orders were naturally given that no other victuallers should go down the river,[2] and Admiral Peyton, who commanded at the Downs, was instructed to keep back some storeships that were coming from Ireland.[3]

Thus the blockade came to an end, and the delegates were deprived of their last hope of securing supplies. It is a further sign of degeneration in the character of the mutiny that some of the seamen, when they could no longer find fresh supplies by means even so respectable as the plunder of naval transports, fell to pillaging private property. Fishing smacks were nominally free to go up the river, and there is evidence that some were actually allowed to pass;[4] but there is no doubt that

1. Buckner to Nepean, 2 June, C 349. Several incoming vessels, including some American ships, were stopped about the same time.

2. *Ibid.*

3. C 354, 4 June.

4. *E.g.*, a smack belonging to Walter Miller (Pro M 199, 7 June, Digest). Parker's wife came from Leith in another of Miller's boats. A schooner was also allowed to go up the river (J. and A. Anderson to the Admiralty Pro. A 76, 6 June, Digest). The orders given by the delegates were "to detain all vessels to and from the Port of London, those excepted whose cargoes are perishable." In the case of these ships a written permit was provided, signed by Parker.

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were sentenced to death; hence the crew of the *Grampus* must have been distinguished as a particularly active body of mutineers. I have not been able to ascertain the day on which the *Grampus* surrendered. Apparently it was with the fleet through practically the whole of the mutiny. About the beginning of June various ships that were in need of stores were ordered to supply themselves from the *Grampus* (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 27). Later in the year the *Grampus* sailed to the West Indies, and her crew began a mutiny in the Jamaica squadron.

several were robbed of their cargo,[1] that other private vessels were plundered, and that sheep were stolen from the Isle of Grain by members of the mutinous fleet.[2] These crimes were not sanctioned by the delegates, and it is possible that the offenders were punished;[3] yet the very fact that some of the mutineers dared to commit such open breeches of the regulations shows that the discipline of the fleet had to some extent broken down, and that in the general disorder the spirit of the "ape and tiger" had begun to assert itself.

The process of degeneration is marked, in fact, by the character of the punishments and the nature of the offence for which they were inflicted. Such crude chastisements as tarring and feathering[4] and ducking[5] suggest the spread of lynch-law. Many officers were roughly handled;[6] and several cases of perjury appear in the punishment lists.[7] "Perjury" meant opposition to the mutiny, in violation of the original oath of fidelity.

1. *E.g.*, in the Digest there is mention of the plunder of an English smack (Pro. C 245, 9 June), and of Dutch fishing vessels (Pro. M 181a, 19 June). *Cunningham* (p. 62) says that some Scottish smacks were robbed. Buckner mentioned that a large amount of flour had been removed from a private vessel at the Nore (C 378). Bray, master of the *Sandwich*, in his evidence (A.S.I. 3685), said that MacCann had stopped a barge and stolen flour from it.

2. *Cunningham*, u.s.

3. It was rumoured on the *Repulse* that a smack had been robbed, and the committee of the *Repulse* wrote to the delegates: "We humbly beg that you will endeavour to find out the perpetrators of the atrocious act" (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 32). The thieves were discovered and punished by the committee of the *Monmouth* (see the *Monmouth* to the *Repulse*, *ibid.*, no 33); and a letter was sent from the *Repulse*, thanking the committee for their stern treatment of "those wretches which ought to be exterminated from the face of the earth" (*ibid.*, no. 21).

4. *Cunningham* (p. 60) says that several officers were tarred and feathered.

5. *Cunningham*, p. 61. See also *Schomberg*, vol. iii, pp. 24-25, n.

6. *Cunningham*, u.s. According to his account the second master of the *Monmouth* was flogged and was shaved over half his head; a master's mate had three dozen lashes, a sergeant of marines three dozen, and a midshipman two dozen

7. *E.g.*, in *Daniel Price's Pocket Book*, no. 4 (10 June), there is a mention of imprisonment for perjury of men of the *Brilliant* and the *Inflexible* (A.S.M. 137). *Cunningham* mentions that four seamen of the *Brilliant* were severely punished for disrespect to the delegates.

It was evidently a term of wide application, comparable to the "royalism" of the French Revolution. In fact the violent section of the mutineers were trying to hold down the rest, and prevent their desertion, by a system of terror. Marsden, when he was at Sheerness, said that the seamen of the *Director* were "completely under the influence of terror";[1] and it is significant that the crew of the *Clyde*, after they had reached the harbour, were fearful lest the *Inflexible* should send a party to cut them out.[2]

The process of ducking, as it was practised by the mutineers both on the officers and on their fellow-seamen, is described in the *Annual Register*:

> Four naval officers went up the Medway on Wednesday night (31 May) in a boat to Rochester. They had all been ducked, which is a curious ceremony, on board the *Sandwich*. They tie the unfortunate victims' feet together, and their hands together, and put their bed at their back, making it fast round them, at the same time adding an eighteen-pounder bar-shot to bring them down. They afterwards make them fast to a tackle suspended from the yard arm; and hoisting them nearly up to the block all at once let go, and drop them souse into the sea, where they remain a minute, and then are again hoisted and let down alternately, till there are scarce any signs of life remaining. After this they hoist them up by the heels, for the purpose of getting the water out of their stomachs, and usually put them into their hammocks. In this instance, however, they put them on board the boat, and ordered the master to convey them safe on shore, or his life should answer for it.[3]

Probably such acts of violence towards the officers more than any other measure aroused the vindictiveness of the naval authorities against the mutineers.

Another aspect of the change that had taken place in the character of the mutiny appears in the last direct communications of the delegates with the authorities on shore. It is true that the delegates at the Nore had

1. Marsden to Nepean (Sheerness), 29 May, A.S.M. 137.
2. *Cunningham*, note k, p. 132.
3. *Ann. Reg.*, Chronicle, p. 34.

always been more aggressive than the leaders at Spithead; but at first they had been respectful, and had tried not to give undue offence to the superior officers. After the visit of the Admiralty they showed little regard for officers or ministers or for public opinion. Their attitude is shown in the "Final Determination of the Fleet," a document delivered to Commissioner Hartwell by Parker and two other delegates, who had gone ashore with a flag of truce.[1] The "Final Determination" is not a list of demands: it is virtually a series of threats. The only demand was that two delegates who had been arrested on shore, and taken to Chatham, should be released within twenty-four hours.[2]

In other clauses there were promises of punishment for anyone who should "affront" delegates who carried a flag of truce;[3] and of bad consequences for those who opposed the supply of provisions to the fleet. It was stated that the captain of the *Inspector* would be held as a hostage for the safety of four men of his ship who had been captured in the Humber.[4] And a protest was

1. Apparently on 31 May. Parker and some others went ashore on that day and asked Hartwell for provisions (Papers of the *Inflexible*, no. 34, A.S.M. 137). In "An Account of the Proceeding on Shore last Night" (not dated) it is stated that Parker, Widgery and Wallace (the delegate of the *Standard* who committed suicide on 14 June) had been to Sheerness to demand stores from Commissioner Hartwell, and had given him the "Final Determination" at the same time (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 23). In his evidence at Parker's trial, Captain Surridge, of the *Iris*, who was present at the interview, said that the Commissioner told the delegates that he would have taken the document to the Admiralty if it had contained no new demands—rather a weak observation, probably used to get rid of the delegates.

2. Presumably they were the two delegates of the *Sandwich* who had been arrested on 29 May at Tilbury, together with fourteen men of the *Lancaster* (Papers of the *Champion*, no. 18, A.S.M. 137).

3. This clause probably refers to some trouble experienced by Parker and Davis, who had gone ashore on the previous day (A.S.M. 137, 31 May).

4. The presence of mutineers from Duncan's squadron in the Humber suggests that there might be a plan of spreading the mutiny to the northern ports (*e.g.*, Hull, North Shields and Leith); but I have found no other trace of such an intention. The fact that the Leith press-gang applied for a rise of wages, and several members left the gang towards the end of June can hardly be taken as evidence, for there was nothing mutinous in their conduct, and there was no trouble with the ships in the harbour (Brenton to Nepean, 26 June, Captains' Letters B, A.S.I. 1517).

entered against the iniquitous practice of calling the seamen "Jacobins and traitors." [1]

The same spirit of defiance appears in a letter to Buckner, written by Parker a few days later, by order of the delegates of the *Sandwich*, as a general retort to the royal proclamation and the measures of opposition ordered by the Admiralty:

> I am commanded by the Committee of his Majesty's Ship *Sandwich* to inform you that the(y) have this Day taken the Opinion of the Delegates of the whole Fleet, who are universally of Opinion that the Conduct of the Administration has been highly improper, in stopping the provisions by Government allow'd to the Seamen. And that the *foolish* proclamations which we have receiv'd are only fitted to exasperate the Minds of a Sett of Honest Men, who would never be more happy then in realy serving their Country.[2]

One other incident may be mentioned, as showing the hostility felt by delegates towards the obdurate ministry. Early in June the yard-ropes, which had hung, threatening but idle, above the deck of the *Sandwich* since the beginning of the mutiny, were at length used to display effigies of Pitt and Dundas for the entertainment of the seamen. It was a childish outburst of passion, but it had some importance as a sign that the leaders of the mutiny were definitely ranged among the enemies of the government.[3]

The incident caused considerable excitement on shore, because it was believed that an actual execution of officers or mutineers was taking place.[4] Even Spencer imagined that the travesty was a real execution, for he told

1. A copy of the "Final Determination" is preserved among the papers of the *Repulse* (no. 36). It is signed by Parker and six others.

2. A.S.I. 727, C 355, 3 June. This letter was used as evidence against Parker in the court-martial.

3. *Cunningham*, p. 72. Some of the mutineers derived further satisfaction from firing at the figures as they hung at the yard-arms. On this same day the *Moniteur* published a report (written on 2 June), in which it was said: "Les matelots disent que Pitt a trompé leurs camarades, et que s'ils le tenaient ils le pendraient à la vergue d'un mât."

4. *London Packet*, 5–7 June.

Grenville that the delegates had hanged two men; and added the circumstantial detail that they were forced to do the work themselves, as no one else on the ship would help them.[1]

These instances of bitter feeling and violent action mark the climax of the mutiny, and they show how far different was the revolt in its later stages from the original rising in support of the well-ordered and respectable movement at Spithead.

It has been shown that these crimes and acts of violence were not carried out entirely in defiance of the delegates' orders, but rather that many of the delegates themselves were among the most active of the mutineers. Clearly, then, the blockade, the plundering of storeships, the fierce punishments, and the defiant communications were all parts of a definite policy. It remains to explain this policy and so in some measure to account for the altered character of the mutiny.

In the first place the opposition of the authorities on shore would naturally have the effect of bringing the most ardent mutineers to the front, or of calling out the least desirable of the ringleaders. Secondly, the delegates may also have been moved by a hope that the Lords of the Admiralty might ultimately give way. They had come to Sheerness after refusing to come. Was it not possible that they might also be brought to terms if only the mutineers were importunate enough? The thought of unconditional surrender would not commend itself to those who were likely to be excepted from the general pardon, and such men would naturally be inclined to hold out as long as there remained any hope of making terms. But this hope could not last. The energy shown by the ringleaders in the latter days

1. *Dropmore Papers*, vol. ii, p. 328 (5 June). *Cunningham* gives the date as 7 June, but clearly the proper date is three or four days earlier. It is possible that the performance was repeated on the 7th.

of the mutiny must have been the energy of despair, and their defiance a make-believe.[1]

They were probably scheming to make their fate as pleasant as possible, whatever the issue of the mutiny might be. The fact that they were instant in proclaiming their loyalty to the King[2] suggests a desire so to influence the authorities in their favour that if they were driven to surrender at discretion, and were brought to trial, they might still avoid the penalty of treason. And it is clear that many of them meditated escape by sea: some of them, indeed, did actually escape to continental ports. Thus, as there was little hope that their enterprise would be successful, they were taking thought for their personal safety in case of failure; and, knowing that the mutiny must soon come to an end, they were determined to enjoy to the full the short lease of freedom and power still left to them.

They discovered when it was too late that they had only been kicking against the goad. It would have been better for them if they had allowed the North Sea fleet to go to the Texel, and had surrendered to the Lords of the Admiralty at a time when the royal pardon might have been extended to the whole body of the mutineers. But in order to understand the reason of their failure it is necessary to turn back and consider the means adopted by the Admiralty and the government to suppress the mutiny.

1. Cf. Mr. Hannay's observation in the *Saturday Review*: "He (Parker) himself obviously felt that the game was going against him, but an air of defiance was kept up, painfully enough."

2. *e.g.*, in the "Final Determination" and Parker's letter of 3 June, and in the Petition to the King, below, p. 216.

CHAPTER XV.

Measures of Opposition.

The Lords of the Admiralty, before they left Sheerness, gave Buckner a paper of instructions for his guidance in dealing with the mutineers.[1] Their policy as laid down in these instructions had two main objects: to isolate the mutinous fleet; and to protect Sheerness and the neighbourhood from attack. To the end of isolating the fleet, the issue of supplies, which had continued during the mutiny, was to be stopped; no boat was to be allowed to leave the shore; and all boats coming from the fleet were to be seized, and the occupants imprisoned unless they had come to make their submission.[2] It was further suggested that written communications addressed to the mutineers should be kept back and examined, so that the fleet might be completely cut off from the shore.[3]

1. A.S.M. 137, 29 May (Secret).

2. *Ibid.* Marsden to Nepean, 29 May (from Rochester): "It now remains to try what effect vigorous measures will produce, after having in vain attempted to persuade them to accept H.M. pardon. Sir Charles is prepared to cut off all communication with them, and I think they will find their situation more alarming than they have been used to consider it. . . . Particular directions were given to the Admiral for his guidance previously to our setting off, and all who from henceforth attempt to land will be detained, the gun-boats stopped, etc."

Spencer to Nepean (Rochester): "To-morrow morning all the gun-boats in the harbour . . . will be taken possession of, and either secured or so placed as to contribute to the defence of he harbour. . . . All further communication with the disaffected ships has been forbidden, and every boat that comes (unless for the purpose of admission) is to be seized and the people sent off prisoners to Chatham."

3. Spencer to Nepean (Rochester), u.s.: "I wish to submit to Mr. Pitt the propriety of ordering the Post Office to stop every letter addressed to any of the disaffected ships, as nothing is more likely to bring them to reason than finding themselves quite cut off from the country."

Marsden to Nepean (Rochester): "Lord Spencer writes about the propriety of stopping correspondence at the Post Office. They must by every possible means, be cut off from intercourse with the shore, and the Essex side of the river must be attended to in this view." The order was not actually given until 9 June.

The instructions for the protection of Sheerness were rather more vague. Ships and gunboats were to be placed across the mouth of the harbour, and the gunboats manned with the loyal crews of the *Espion* and *Niger* frigates;[1] and Buckner was "to act in co-operation with Sir Charles Grey in defending the dockyard and the fort."

There were also general orders to help the officers to escape from their ships,[2] and to do "everything which might distress the mutineers and prevent them from doing mischief." The authorities at Sheerness were thus virtually given a free hand in dealing with the mutiny.

The policy of the Admiralty was undoubtedly wise. It was most desirable that the seamen should be induced by peaceable means to return to their duty. Apart from the evils of civil strife the Board had learnt from their experience in connexion with Duncan's squadron the danger of sending one section of the navy to fight against another. They were still prepared for hostilities; but if a contest were necessary they did not wish to be the aggressors. Their policy, so far as it was concerned with active warfare, was entirely defensive.[3] And the event showed that they had adopted the best possible method of combating the mutiny. But for the serious danger to the state, the fatal conflicts that preceded the surrender of many of the ships, and the tragic retribution demanded by justice from the ringleaders, the collapse of the mutiny would have seemed ridiculous. There is irony in the contrast between the noisy pretensions of

1. Spencer (writing from Sheerness) mentions "the crews of the *Espion* and the *Niger*, who are disposed (especially the latter) to do anything either afloat or ashore that may be wished of them—a lucky circumstance, as they will, in case of hostilities, be of great use in the dockyard and garrison."

2. It will be remembered that this measure was suggested in the memorandum of the Cabinet (27 May). See above, p. 150.

3. Spencer to Nepean (Sheerness), 29 May: "Sir C. Grey . . . . is prepared to take the most vigorous means of defence that this situation will afford." The word 'defence' was underlined by Spencer.

the mutineers and the quiet and deliberate ostracism carried out by the commanders at Sheerness. It is not yet time, however, to consider the result of the Admiralty's policy; it is enough to see how the instructions were put into practice.

The responsibility for the preparations on shore fell chiefly on Sir Charles Grey, the commander of the garrison. At the beginning of June he was joined by Lord Keith, who came nominally as second-in-command to Buckner, but practically, it would seem, relieved Buckner of his responsibility for suppressing the revolt.[1]

No time was lost in putting the instructions of the Board of Admiralty into effect. On 30 May the customary supply of provisions was stopped,[2] and orders of less immediate importance were received, that the payment of ships at the Nore should be postponed *sine die*.[3] The naval commanders were also concerned in the laying of booms and cables across the mouth of the harbour, and the disposal of ships and gunboats behind the booms.[4]

If the mutineers did not attack Sheerness, there were still two further courses of action open to them: they might sail further up the Thames and try to overcome the government by making an attack on Tilbury or Gravesend, or they might escape from the river and sail to Ireland or some foreign country. The naval authorities had to provide against both of these chances. There was some thought of putting a boom across the Thames above Sheerness, in order to prevent the mutineers from making their way up Long Reach. The Navy Board were informed that a boom had been put across the river

1. A.S.O. 133 (Order and Instructions), p. 124, 1 June. *Cunningham* (p. 68) says that Keith took command as Sheerness. It may be supposed that he was deputed to do the more active parts of Buckner's work.
2. A.S.M. 137. Orders to Commissioner Proby, and the Agent Victualler.
3. A.S.O. 231, 30 May, Orders to Buckner.
4. *Cunningham*, u.s. This work was directed by Captain Dixon, of the *Espion*.

two years before;[1] but when they inquired from the Ordnance Board, they found that the project had been abandoned in 1795, and that a new boom could not be made in less than a fortnight. It was suggested that a line of colliers should be used instead;[2] but before any such plan could be put into practice the danger had passed. And in the meantime other measures had been adopted for the defence of the river.[3]

The protection of Sheerness and of other parts of the shore made it all the more likely that the mutineers would eventually try to escape by sea. But they could only make their way to the open sea by following the channel, which was marked out by buoys. Any one who examines the Thames mouth from the neighbourhood of the Nore Light Ship, and notices how thickly the water is dotted with buoys, will readily understand that these marks are essential to safe navigation. And the same impression will be conveyed by the study of a chart of the sea in these parts, showing the intricate windings of the deeps and shallows. Even in the daytime it would be very hazardous to take a large ship down the river without the guidance of the buoys. If the mutinous fleet were to escape, however, it was much more probable that it would go in the night, so that its course could not be known to the authorities on shore; and if the buoys were gone, and the lamps of lighthouses and lightships were put out, the passage out of the Thames by night would be almost impossible. The Admiralty therefore adopted the obvious plan of sinking or removing the buoys, and putting out the lights.[4] It was suggested at first that hulks should be sunk in the mouth of the

1. Navy Board, 9 June (Digest).
2. Ordnance Board, 9 June (Digest).
3. See below, p. 202
4. It should be observed that these measures would not endanger any merchant vessels, as Admiral Peyton, at the Downs, prevented all ships from going any nearer to the Thames mouth, and several ships-of-war were cruising in the North Sea to keep back vessels travelling to the Thames.

Thames,[1] but the suggestion was not carried out. The other method, which proved quite effective, was simpler. The work of removing the buoys must have been dangerous, for it was not likely that the mutineers, if they were able to interfere, would allow the men who were cutting off their means of retreat to go unhindered.[2] It would be interesting to know how the work was done; whether it was done by night or by day; and what difficulties were encountered. At present it can only be said that the operations were directed by the Trinity Corporation, and were carried out by Captain Bloomfield on 7 June.[3] It would seem that the buoys were sunk the the beacons cut down, the lights at Harwich, Orfordness and the North Foreland put out,[4] and the lightship and buoy removed from the Nore to Whiting Sand.[5] These measures evidently roused the mutineers to activity, for it was feared that they would moor boats in place of the buoys;[6] and the *Ariadne*, with two gunboats, was sent to the Swin to keep them away.[7]

By the means described above, the naval officers at Sheerness contrived, during the first week of June, to make it extremely difficult for the mutineers to attack the town or to make their way out of the river. The wisdom of the Admiralty's policy may be appreciated when it is remembered that these measures, which deprived the mutiny of most of its danger, were carried out without

1. Buckner to Nepean, C 348, 1 June.
2. It will be shown below (p. 226) that they did actually try to interfere, and that their attempt was not successful.
3. Trinity Corporation, 7 June (Digest); *Cunningham*, p. 70. It was hoped that the marks might be removed in time to prevent the rest of Duncan's squadron from coming up the river; but the ships arrived too soon (Nepean to Duncan, 6 June, A.S.O. 1352, p. 128).
4. Orders in Council, 6 June (Digest). The order to replace the buoys and restore the lights was given on 21 June.
5. Trinity Corporation, 9 June.
6. The design of the mutineers was probably to put lights in the boats, so that they might be able to escape by night.
7. It was suggested by the officials at Trinity House (9 June) that revenue cutters should be sent out for this purpose. The Board of Admiralty approved the suggestion, but sent gun-boats instead of revenue cutters (A.S.M. 137, 9 June).

any passage of arms between the insurgents and the forces at Sheerness.

While the naval officers were engaged in this work, the military authorities, led by Sir Charles Grey, were actively preparing for the defence of the shore. Their functions were to strengthen the fortifications, to seize the occupants of any boats that came to the shore, and to arrest any mutineers who might be found on land. Grey was an excellent commander. He was full of enthusiasm and energy, and as he believed in the loyalty of his troops he was likely to inspire them with confidence in himself. Marsden was so much struck with his ability that he expressed a wish that Grey had been opposed to Bonaparte, in place of Wurmser or Alvintzy.[1] Grey's first care was for the defence of Sheerness. On 21 May two regiments of militia had come into the garrison, and at the end of the month two more regiments were brought there.[2] With these men he arranged for the protection of the fort, the dockyard, the well that supplied the garrison, and the ferry across the Medway.[3] His work was not free from difficulties: the fort was in a "ruinous state," and could not withstand a vigorous attack;[4] the increase in the garrison must have given some trouble to those who were responsible for the commissariat;[5] and the safety of the town depended

1. "Sir Charles Grey is a fine, spirited fellow, and eager that the temporizing system should be at an end. . . . I am satisfied [he] will do everything that he ought to do. It is to be regretted that he did not command the Austrian armies in Italy. Please to recollect that this is written after supper" (29 May, Rochester).

2. Spencer to Nepean (29 May, Rochester): "Sir C. Grey . . . has ordered two more regiments to march to the garrison, meaning to send away at least one of those now there." It is not clear why the regiment should be sent away. Possibly a regiment of regulars was substituted for the militia; or it may have been that more troops were needed to protect the surrounding country.

3. Spencer (*ibid.*): "Every precaution has been taken to defend the dockyard and garrison, and to resist all attempts of violence which the mutineers may make."

4. Grey to Dundas, A.S.I. 4172, 25 June.

5. There is no mention of actual want of provisions at Sheerness, but Buckner mentioned on 7 June (A.S.I. 727, C 361) that bread and beer had run short at Chatham.

In the strange report from a spy quoted in the Appendix there is a

entirely on the fidelity of the soldiers. Fortunately they showed no disposition to join in the revolt of the navy—on the other hand they showed their loyalty by welcoming the ships that deserted the mutinous fleet and came into the harbour. And the strength of the fortress was not put to the test. Moreover the men who were employed in the dockyard were strongly opposed to the mutiny.[1]

The town was protected as well as it might be by the guns of the fortress and the ships and booms in the harbour. It was also necessary to defend the outlying districts. For this purpose temporary batteries were made in suitable places and supplied with guns from the invaluable frigates *Espion* and *Niger*.[2] To secure the Medway and the ferry, a mortar battery was erected, at Buckner's suggestion, on the Isle of Grain.[3] Cannon balls were kept hot in furnaces, so that they might be used at any moment in repelling an attack.[4] These works completed the defensive system.

The military forces were also detailed to watch the shore, and to prevent communications with the fleet. Both the right and left banks of the river were to be

1. On 29 May a blue flag was flying on the *Vesuve* gun-boat in Sheerness harbour. The delegates, who were returning from the shore, succeeded, after a scuffle, in hauling it down and hoisting a red flag. But the men from the dockyard replaced the blue flag, saying that they would not have a red one in the yard (Report of Proceedings at Sheerness, A.S.M. 137).

2. *Cunningham*, pp. 69, 70. Captain Dixon, of the *Espion*, who appears to have been a very active officer, was employed in this work as well as in the defence of the harbour.

3. Buckner to Nepean, C 348, 1 June. In *Clowes* (vol. iv, p. 175) it is stated that batteries were erected on both sides of the Thames. But I find no other mention of batteries on the left bank. It was wholly unlikely that the mutineers would deliver an attack on that side; there was no town or fortress east of Tilbury to serve as a prize; and, as the river is shallow for a considerable distance from the left bank, large ships could not safely go within effective range of the shore.

4. *Ann. Reg.*, p. 216.

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suggestion of this difficulty, and of others: "It will be serious indeed if there is a want of fresh water at Sheerness. Heaven keep the garrison from an epidemic distemper. These may be the beginning of sorrows, but who shall say what will end them." A.S.I. 3974 (Intelligence), p. 264, 10 June.

patrolled; and it was by no means easy to carry out the work effectively. There was some reason, therefore, for the rumour that men from the *Lancaster* had gone ashore by the marshes of Crayford or Erith,[1] and for Admiral Keeler's suspicion that "those gentry who called themselves delegates" were going by night to Whitstable or Hartrey. That part of the coast had not been watched by the soldiers: there were woods close to the shore to provide cover; and fast boats were always moored there.[2] Buckner himself had more certain information that the mutineers were communicating with Leigh by boat, and that some of them had been seen going towards Feversham.[3] It may very well be that among those who went to Feversham were the two mutineers who, on the same evening, were looking for the "gentleman in black" on Rochester Bridge.[4]

Nevertheless, even if some of the seamen did break through the line of guards their communication with the shore availed them nothing; and the number who escaped from the fleet must have been very small. Other lines of soldiers were posted behind those who watched the shore. Light cavalry scoured the country in search of deserters.[5] Pickets of "peace officers" were stationed at all points of strategic importance between London and the east coast.[6]

The whole of the official system of opposition to the mutiny has now been described: the protection of the town and harbour of Sheerness; the prevention of communication between the fleet and the shore; the stoppage of supplies; the removal of buoys and lights

1. A.S.I. 4172, Floud to King, 7 June.
2. Keeler to Spencer, 7 June, A.S.I. 579 (Admls. Unemployed).
3. A delegate of the *Sandwich* named Samuel Penny escaped on shore, and was at large for five months. When he was arrested, at the beginning of November, he was using the name of Goff as an *alias* (Buckner to Nepean, 4 June, C 354; Pro. C 121, 4 November, Digest). Buckner said that there was a "constant communication" between Leigh and the Nore.
4. *Cunningham*, p. 98. See below, p. 339.
5. Floud to King, 7 June (A.S.I. 4172).
6. *Ibid.*

from the Thames mouth; and the preparations for the discovery and arrest of deserters from the fleet. But the naval and military authorities were not left to contend alone against the mutiny. They had the assurance that national feeling was on their side, for great numbers of private people on shore entered into a very practical alliance with them by supporting them substantially with money or with arms.

It is impossible to formulate with accuracy the changes of public opinion, to summarize the silent working of a multitude of minds. So also the process cannot be described by which the feeling of the nation was transformed from a friendly inclination towards the mutineers into a strong hostility against them. But it is certain that, although the country as a whole favoured the seamen at the beginning of the Nore mutiny, a month later there were very few who did not welcome its suppression.

At the outset the seamen had the advantage of popularity and public sympathy; but as the mutiny went forward their conduct gave more and more offence, until almost every class in the community was alienated from them. The friends of the government would not support the movement after the return of the Board of Admiralty from Sheerness.[1] No respectable citizen would tolerate the crimes and excesses of the more violent mutineers.[2] The desertion of Duncan by the North Sea fleet would incense all who had no wish to hear, as their forefathers of the fourth generation had heard, the guns of the Dutchmen sounding to the gates of London. Above all, the commercial classes were opposed to the mutiny. The war alone made foreign trade precarious enough. If the last security of British shipping were removed, the

1. This fact was urged very strongly by Sir Charles Grey in his letter to Dundas (25 June, A.S.I. 4172). Grey regarded the visit of the Admiralty as "a most fortunate event showing the whole inhabitants . . . . how desirous government was to set the misguided seamen right."

2. Cf. a letter from Captain Alms, of the *Repulse*, to one of his officers: "All the country are in arms, and detest them" (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 34).

mercantile classes would be ruined. Indeed, the loss of sea power would be disastrous, directly or indirectly, to every branch of trade and industry. It was probably the blockade of the Thames that finally moved the merchants to action. Meetings of traders and shipowners were held in London and some other ports.[1] At these meetings resolutions were passed condemning the policy of the seamen, and in London a committee was appointed to counteract the mutiny.[2] The members of the committee sent letter of thanks to the captains of the ships that escaped from the Nore and to the crews that volunteered for service against the mutinous seamen.[3] Their chief strength and utility lay, however, in their command of capital. They were able to distribute money among the crews of the loyal ships and to give bounties to those who volunteered. A bounty of two guineas was given to petty officers, and one guinea to seamen, and a reward of £100 was offered for the conviction of those who had instigated the seamen to revolt.[4] To help the enlistment of volunteers the Admiralty gave an assurance that they should not be detained after the suppression of the mutiny.[5]

Several private persons also tried to help the government by giving advice. Some of the advice was by no means sound. There was, for example, a very impolitic suggestion that press gangs should be used to draft in recruits for service against the mutineers.[6] A more practical scheme was to induce "vagrant seamen," presumably deserters, to enlist for this purpose, by

1. In London, at the Royal Exchange, and afterwards at the Marine Society's Office, on 8 June (Pro. J 40a, Digest; *Cunningham*, p. 105; *Schomberg*, vol. iii, pp. 36, 37; in Leith on the same day (Pro. R 9, Digest), and on 16 June at Aberdeen (Pro. M 247).
2. Pro. J 406, 9 June (Digest).
3. Pro. J 40a; *Cunningham*, u.s. In the Digest there are mentioned resolutions of thanks to the *Clyde*, *San Fiorenza*, *Serapis*, *Discovery*, *Firm*, *Repulse* and *Kangaroo*.
4. Pro. J 40e, 10 June.
5. Pro. J 40g, 12 June.
6. Pro. A 17, 7 June.

promising them pardon and payment.[1] And a most objectionable proposal was made to punish the innocent in place of the guilty by confiscating the property of the mutineers and sending their wives and children to Botany Bay.[2]

The appeal for volunteers was eminently successful. They were chiefly needed for the protection of the river above Sheerness. It has been shown that the mutineers were effectually prevented from escaping from the Thames either by land or by sea, and from attacking Sheerness. But there was nothing more than a couple of gunboats higher up the river to cut off their approach to Long Reach.[3] In the case of an attack in force these gunboats would be entirely overpowered. For this reason the volunteers, who flocked in great numbers to the recruiting officers, were sent on board five of the ships at Tilbury, which had refused to join the mutiny; and these ships, the *Neptune*, the *Centaur*, the *Acasta*, the *Endymion*, and the *Lancaster*, were taken down Long Reach, under the command of Sir Erasmus Gower, of the *Neptune*.[4]

The main object of these preparations was to cut off the mutineers from communication with London, and to prevent them from making an attack on Tilbury, or any other place of strategic importance on the river. But the Board of Admiralty probably intended that if aggression were necessary, the mutinous fleet should be attacked from the sea by Curtis's squadron, or some other reliable force, and from the river by the volunteers under Gower.

Some private shipowners offered the use of their

1. Pro. A 18 (15 June).
2. Jos. Cawthorne to Admty. Pro. C 49 (12 June).
3. Capts. D 38 (4 June), Digest
4. *Cunningham*, p. 71; Orders and Instructions, 8 and 9 June (A.S.O. 231, p. 138).

vessels;[1] many naval and marine officers volunteered;[2] and several entire crews offered their services, to the great satisfaction of the Board of Admiralty.[3] There were also yeomanry and volunteers among the troops that watched on shore to prevent the escape of deserters.[4]

Happily, none of these auxiliary forces was called upon to make open war against the mutineers. Nevertheless they were of service to the government, not only as a resource in case of hostilities, but also as an indication of the state of public opinion. The very fact that large numbers of people were willing actively to support the administration against the seamen must have given greater confidence to the naval authorities, and must correspondingly have depressed the ringleaders of the mutiny.

The display of national antipathy to the rising had a further notable influence, in encouraging the government to oppose the mutiny by legislation. The seamen at the Nore encountered three kinds of opposition. By the action of the officers at Sheerness they were isolated from the land and from the open sea; by the hostility of large numbers of the public on shore it was made clear to them that the favour, which had been almost universally shown to the mutineers at Spithead, was withheld from them; and, thirdly, by the measures of Parliament which are now to be described, they were put in the position of outlaws and were assured that the representatives and rulers of the nation, almost to a man, were against them.

The government was undoubtedly strengthened in its

1. *E.g.*, William Playfair offered a vessel manned with Dutch sailors (Pro. p. 150, 7 June, Digest). Samuel Hadley, apparently a shipowner, undertook to raise fifty volunteers.

2. *E.g.*, Major Mitchell (Pro. M 218, 9 June); two lieutenants of the navy and some of marines (Lieuts. K, 7 June), Captain Knight, of the *Montague* (Capts. K 128, 13 June), and Captain (afterwards R.-Admiral) Owen, who was put in command of two gun-brigs (*Cunningham*, p. 83).

3. *E.g.*, the crews of the *Kangaroo* (Capts. B 399, 8 June, Digest), *Childers* sloop (Capts. O, 14 June), and *Hector* (Pro. 38a, 14 June).

4. Instructions to the Duke of York and Lords Lieutenants, 1 June (A.S.I. 4172).

work of legislating against the mutiny by the knowledge that the country as a whole would support its measures.[1] And the sanction of public opinion was really important in this case; for the existing laws against sedition were severe, inquisitorial, and in part new.[2] Any addition to them which had not the support of a strong majority of the nation might induce the political discontent that was smouldering in all parts of the country to burst out into dangerous rebellion.

The members of Parliament, however, had no reason for doubt as to the wishes of their constituents. The mutiny was obviously unpopular;[3] and it is in itself an evidence of the feeling of the country that no voice was raised in Parliament in support of the seamen. Even the most determined members of the opposition only objected to the measures proposed by the government on the ground that they would tend to increase the evil—"une loi rigoureuse produit des crimes."[4]

The subject of the mutiny was formally introduced in both houses by a message from the King, calling on all his loyal subjects to help in subduing the revolt, and asking the members of Parliament to adopt some means

1. The majority of the volunteers were enrolled, as a matter of fact, after Parliament had done its work. Nevertheless, the trend of public opinion must have been clear to the ministers at the beginning of June. It is unlikely that the Nore mutiny was ever supported as cordially as the Spithead mutinies; and, as has been remarked before, the return of the Lords of the Admiralty and the desertion of Duncan by the North Sea fleet must have alienated almost all public sympathy from the cause of the seamen.

2. Viz., the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, 23 May, 1794; and the two Acts passed in January 1796 after the assault on the King (Acts for the better Prevention of Treason and Sedition and for the Protection of His Majesty's Person).

3. "At this time the character of a British seaman had fallen very much in the public estimation" (*Ann. Reg.*, p. 221, n.).

4. *E.g.*, by Sheridan and Hobhouse. The phrase quoted above was used by Hobhouse in committee (*Parl. Hist.* xxxiii, 812). It should be mentioned that Sir Francis Burdett attributed the mutiny entirely to the oppressive system of the government; but he was careful to say nothing which would involve him in actual support of the mutineers. Whitbread neither spoke nor voted: it may be supposed, therefore, that he was away from the House. For his relations with the seamen, see below, pp. 350, 351.

of preventing the seduction from their allegiance of his Majesty's forces, both on land and at sea. The message was read on 1 June, and an address was at once returned, promising that the required measures should be taken. On the same day Pitt brought forward a bill based on the suggestion contained in the King's message. He pointed out the need for some further legislation in opposition to the mutiny; no member could doubt that the seamen had been seduced from their duty, or that attempts had been made to seduce the soldiers, and these facts alone proved that the existing laws against seditious practices were inadequate. "The indignation of the Houses of Parliament," he said, "ought to be more strongly directed against the instigators than against the misguided and deluded men, who for a time, and he trusted, only for a time, had been seduced." [1] Moreover, it was at that time an aggravated misdemeanour to persuade soldiers and sailors to desert, whereas it was only a common misdemeanour to persuade them to mutiny. The offence could not easily be defined, for it was usually committed in secret, and no hard and fast line could be drawn between inciting to mutiny and merely expressing discontent with the existing system. Pitt therefore made his definition very broad and general, and moderated the penalty accordingly. He proposed "to treat any attempt to excite sedition and mutiny in his Majesty's service, or to withdraw any part of his Majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance, as an aggravated species of misdemeanour, leaving to the discretion of the court the power of inflicting, not only the penalties of fine and imprisonment, as in other cases of misdemeanour, but as circumstances might require and penalties of banishment and transportation also." [2]

1. *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii, 798.
2. For the debates on the King's message and the bill for preventing the seduction of sailors and soldiers, see *Parl. Hist* xxxiii, 796–810; and *Ann. Reg.*, p. 217.

The bill in this form passed its first and second readings on 1 June. Two days later it was considered in committee. At the suggestion of Serjeant Adair its design was materially altered: the definition of the offence was so restricted as to include only conscious and deliberate efforts to stir up a mutiny, and the crime thus defined was regarded as felony, and made punishable with death.[1] But the increased rigour of the penalty was counterbalanced to some extent by a clause providing that the act should only remain in force for one month after the beginning of the next session. This time limit was advisable, for the act was only a temporary expedient, and was so stringent that it could not well be left indefinitely on the statute-book. The bill thus amended passed through all the remaining stages on 3 June, without opposition.[2]

Directly after it had left the Commons, another bill was introduced by Pitt, to enforce by law the measure, which had already been ordered by the Admiralty and carried into effect by Grey, of preventing communications between the mutineers and persons on shore. Pitt explained that whereas the bill that had already passed was a preventive measure, this second bill was intended to be remedial, and aimed at the actual suppression of the existing disorder. It was proposed that a proclamation should be issued, and read in the dockyard at Sheerness, declaring certain ships to be in a state of mutiny; that any seamen who should not return to their duty after the issue of the proclamation should forfeit their claim to a pension and to relief from Greenwich Hospital; and that any persons who should hold communication with ships that had been declared

1. *I.e.*, it was regarded as felony, "maliciously and advisedly to commit any act of mutiny or treason, or to make, or endeavour to make, any mutinous or traitorous assemblies, or to commit any mutinous or traitorous acts whatever." This was the definition of the crime that was finally adopted.

2. For the debate in committee, see *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii, 810–813. The text of the act (37 Geo. III., 70), is given in *Statutes Revised*, vol. ii, p. 747.

mutinous should be adjudged guilty of felony. At the committee stage there was some opposition on the part of two extreme Whigs,[1] who maintained that conciliation was needed instead of repression. But the bill, including a clause that named the penalty as death without benefit of clergy, passed unanimously through the House of Commons on 5 June,[2] and on the next day went through the remaining stages.

On 6 June Orders in Council were issued, in accordance with this second act, announcing that all ships named by the Lords of the Admiralty as mutinous would forthwith become subject to the prohibitions and penalties of the Act. And it was further provided that any three members of the Board of Admiralty might receive the submission of any of the mutinous ships; and that the act should cease to apply to any ship's company that should so make a formal surrender. The submission, however, was only to be made "under such terms and restrictions as his Majesty should think fit." [3] The purpose of this clause was that the ringleaders might be excluded from the general pardon and brought to trial.

The Admiralty issued a similar proclamation on the next day, declaring twenty ships at the Nore to be in a state of mutiny and rebellion, and forbidding everyone except Admiral Buckner to hold any communication with them. And a further proclamation was published from the Court, in the sense of the King's message to Parliament, calling on all loyal subjects to help in subduing the mutiny [4] This proclamation, in conjunction with the acts of Parliament, probably gave a considerable stimulus

1. Sir Francis Burdett, and Charles Sturt, who was a retired naval officer.

2. Burdett was absent at the time of the division, and no one except Sturt was willing to act as teller for the Noes. The bill therefore passed the committee stage nem. con., and the third reading was unopposed. For the debates on this bill, see *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii, 813–820.

3. See *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, pp. 254, 255.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 256.

to the enlistment of volunteers. In fact the government and the nation received mutual support in opposing the seamen. These measures—the two acts of Parliament, the orders in council, and the proclamations—comprise the whole work of the government against the mutiny.

Some account has been given of the three classes of opposition to the mutiny; the active preparations of the naval and military authorities; the efforts of private individuals; and the legislative measures of the government. It must now be shown how, with the help of dissensions among the mutineers themselves, these measures were successful in defeating the rising.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Decline of the Mutiny.

At the time when the Board of Admiralty was in Sheerness the mutiny was at a low ebb. And the arrival of the North Sea fleet, although it brought an increase of strength to the rebellious faction, did not restore the unanimity which was altogether necessary for success. Among the crews of the Nore fleet, among the delegates themselves, there were those who wished the mutiny to end. Even in Duncan's squadron there was a strong party of opposition. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the instructions of the Admiralty and the acts of Parliament came into force, and the hostility of the public on shore became clear, other of the more loyal crews should make their escape, nor that those who inclined to surrender should increase in number, until they overwhelmed the obstinate section of the mutineers.

In fact, several crews at the Nore were ready to abandon the mutiny before the arrival of the North Sea fleet; and although they were held back by terror of the ardent mutineers, they still wished to escape and to make their surrender when a suitable opportunity should present itself.[1] The *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* had already gone, and several gunboats had been driven into the harbour by rough weather. Three or four days[2] after their escape, the *Firm*, floating battery, was taken to

1. *Cunningham* (pp. 151, 152) was of opinion that several ships would have followed the example of the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* if Duncan's squadron had not come.

2. There are some allusions in the original documents to the escape of the *Firm* (*e.g.*, in the resolutions of the Committee of Merchants). The *Firm* was one of the ships that had shown a white flag on 28 May, when the Board was at Sheerness (A.S.M. 137, Report). But for the actual event we have to rely on Cunningham, and he does not make it clear whether the *Firm* escaped on 2 or 3 June.

Queenborough and thence to Sheerness, under the command of Lieutenant Pine, by a crew that was very largely loyal.

As the last detachment of Duncan's squadron was entering the Thames on the night of 5 June, the crews heard the sound of guns ahead of them;[1] and the noise was heard on shore. The firing was loud and persistent, and it was supposed that a general engagement had begun between the loyal and the mutinous forces.[2] In reality the cannonade was all directed against the store-ships *Serapis* and *Discovery*, which were making their way to Sheerness. Their crews were hired and had no interest in the mutiny. When the Lords of the Admiralty were in Sheerness the crews had shown signs of loyalty, and now, piloted by the master of the *Serapis*, they had begun their perilous passage to the harbour at a time when the tide had brought most of the fleet stern-on to them.[3] The time was well chosen, for although many ships opened fire on them it was impossible immediately to fire broadsides, and the darkness[4] made the gunnery so futile that only one man was injured, and his wound was slight.

These were the exploits of loyal crews, who would probably have acted in the same way even if the authorities on shore had made no attempt to resist the mutiny. But on the other seamen the action of the government and the Admiralty had a decided effect. The visit of the Board to Sheerness marked a definite change in the situation and conduct of the mutineers. Before the visit the seamen hoped by terrifying, coercing, incommoding or importuning the government to bring them to terms. Afterwards the issues were clear. The mutiny was resolved into a trial of endurance between

1. *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 426.
2. Report from Williams (the magistrate), A.S.I. 4172. He said that the firing was general, and for that reason it was supposed, wrongly, that other ships had escaped up the Thames.
3. *Cunningham*, p. 67.
4. The *Serapis* escaped at 11.0 p.m.

the government and the seamen, a trial in which nearly all circumstances favoured the government. By carrying thoroughly into effect their policy of isolation, the authorities on shore made their ultimate success almost certain; and as their prospect grew brighter, the hope of the mutineers correspondingly failed.

Spencer had reason in writing: "I think they will soon find their situation more alarming than they have been used to consider it." [1] The delegates left Sheerness on the 29th, with a great show of defiance. But when two of them, Parker and Davis, went ashore on the next day, they found themselves helpless and unpopular. The inhabitants of Sheerness wanted to arrest them and hold them as hostages;[2] and the commander of the garrison afterwards said that if the townspeople had been allowed a free hand they would have hung every mutineer who came ashore.[3] So greatly had public opinion changed since the beginning of the mutiny. Unpopularity was discouraging to the mutineers, whose main reliance was in the support of the nation. But they soon encountered greater and more pressing difficulties. They found that they would be prevented from landing at Sheerness, and —a still more serious discovery—that the provisions which had been supplied to them regularly would no longer be forthcoming. Outwardly the delegates showed indignation at the change in their treatment. Three of them went ashore on 31 May to protest against the stoppage of provisions, and to deliver as a counterblast

1. A.S.M. 137, 29 May (Rochester).

2. Apparently some of the townspeople actually tried to detain them, for on the same day they wrote a curious letter, asking that if they were taken into custody their arrest should be carried out in a decent and official manner (Pro. P 21, Digest; Pro. P 20, 30 May, Digest). The Admiralty also doubted the wisdom of letting Parker and Davis return to the fleet (A.S.M. 137, 31 May).

3. Grey to Dundas, 25 June (A.S.I. 4172).

the "Final Determination of the Fleet."[1] And on 3 June Parker, instructed by the central committee, sent a letter to Buckner in which he described the conduct of the administration in cutting off the supplies as "highly improper," and referred to the royal proclamations as "foolish" and only fitted "to exasperate the Minds of a Sett of Honest men."[2]

High words and threats were a part of the mutineers' policy; but there can be no doubt that their indignation, which may well have been real enough, was coupled with a feeling of dismay.[3] Such a feeling must at least have existed among those of the delegates and the other seamen who were determined mutineers, and were too deeply implicated in the revolt to expect a free pardon. There was little hope with them of coming to terms. They must defeat the government, or they must be themselves defeated; and they knew that if they surrendered it would be useless to cry for quarter. It has been shown how the opposition to their revolt drove them to desperation; how in answer to the stoppage of supplies they stopped the traffic of the Thames; and in hollow defiance of the acts of Parliament they hung in effigy two members of the Cabinet; and how, in the disorder occasioned by the crisis and by violent counsels, there were ugly outbreaks of crime and cruelty. The extent of their fear is suggested by a rumour that was current among them at the beginning of June, to the effect that a reward of £1,000 had been offered for the arrest of a

1. Apparently Parker and Davis were informed of the change in the policy of the Admiralty when they went ashore on 30 May, for when Parker, Widgery and Wallace went to Sheerness on 31 May they bore with them a flag of truce (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 23).

2. A.S.I. 727, C 355. The whole letter is quoted above (p. 189). Copies of the royal proclamations had been sent into the fleet concealed in newspapers. Apparently this measure produced the letter from Parker.

3. It is an indication of this feeling that a note was sent from the delegates to the *Repulse*, and probably to all the other ships, on 2 June, giving warning that it was no longer safe to go on shore (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 30).

delegate, and a reward of £10 for the arrest of a common seaman.[1]

While the ringleaders were driven to violence and desperation, a different effect was produced on the minds of the less ardent mutineers. They were the honest sailors, who were rightly considered by people on shore to have been misled by evil and designing men. Their conduct was deplored, but they themselves were rather pitied than blamed. They had supported the mutiny with a good heart so long as it seemed likely to bring substantial benefits to themselves and their fellow-seamen. But now it appeared that they were on the losing side. They were beleaguered in their ships; they were outlawed by Parliament, and they had become in fact, though not in sentiment, the enemies of the nation. It was natural that they should wish to abandon their false position and make their peace with the government.[2]

The ringleaders evidently knew that large numbers of their followers were wavering, and they tried to restore their power both by terror and by conciliation. Something has already been said of their system of terror. In regard to the method of conciliation, it is probable that the repeated protestations of loyalty to the Crown were designed not only to impress the nation favourably, but also to reassure the mass of the mutineers as to the intentions of their leaders.

The position of the delegates had indeed become very difficult. It has been shown that they had before them two alternative policies: to stay and overawe the govern-

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 30. There was apparently no ground for this rumour. The London merchants did not offer their reward of £100 until 10 June, and it was not until the mutiny was almost at an end that a reward of £500 for the apprehension of Parker was officially proclaimed. See copy of the Proclamation in the British Museum (1222, 1, 9, 29).

2. The chief evidence of this feeling is of course the collapse of the mutiny. But before the collapse began there were other signs, *e.g.*, the punishments for "perjury" and for disrespect towards the delegates; and such minor indications as a letter from six men of the *Inflexible*, who disapproved of the conduct of the delegates and asked to be sent ashore. (To Blake, president of the *Inflexible*, 9 June: *Daniel Price's Note-Book*, no. 3, A.S.M. 137.)

ment, or to escape and go into voluntary exile. The meetings of the central committee must have been troubled by heated debates, for opinions were divided. Some delegates were inclined to surrender; some favoured the active continuance of the mutiny; some were for putting to sea. The objection to an unconditional surrender was obvious. The preparations of the Admiralty and of the military commanders made the threat of open warfare ineffective; and the removal of the buoys and lights made the remaining scheme very precarious. The most experienced pilots could hardly make the passage of the Thames mouth without disaster, and the pilots, even if they were willing to help the mutineers, were not allowed to leave the shore.[1] Thus in every line of action the delegates were confronted with difficulties. Moreover they could not long remain inactive, awaiting the course of events. Their followers were already divided, and the only hope of holding them together lay in aggressive policy. There was, in addition, a more urgent reason for haste. Since the supplies had been cut off the commissariat of the fleet had become a serious problem. It is true that the mutineers had plundered two storeships and that the ships of Duncan's squadron had provisions; but even with such relief as these vessels gave, the fleet as a whole was in want of food and fresh water, and if the seamen had stayed long at the Nore they would have been simply starved into surrender.[2]

In these embarrassing circumstances, the delegates adopted a policy which was probably, from their point of view, the soundest that could be chosen. Although there was little hope of extorting terms from the govern-

1. The detention of pilots on shore was suggested by Admiral Keeler (7 June, A.S.I. 4172). The suggestion was hardly necessary, for in any case the act for restraining intercourse with the fleet, together with the vigilance of the authorities at Sheerness, would make it very difficult and dangerous for pilots to come to the mutinous ships. There were some pilots in the fleet (see below, p. 228); but they were probably unwilling to serve.

2. For the importance of the lack of supplies in defeating the mutiny, see below, p. 220.

ment, they decided to make the last bid for conciliation by appealing directly to the King himself.

They prepared the way for their overtures by announcing their loyalty. It happened that on 4 June Captain Knight, of the *Montague*, was allowed to go ashore on parole. His wife had come on the ship from Yarmouth, and the delegates agreed to release her from her very disagreeable situation.[1] Knight accompanied her; and the committee, seeing in his visit a useful chance of communicating with the shore, instructed him to publish this declaration: "Every Delegate has sworn himself that he has no communication with any Jacobins or people of that Discription, which they have amply prov'd by having in their Custody at this Moment Two Vessels bound to our Enemies ports." Parker further assured Captain Knight, in conversation, that if the Dutch were still in Texel, he would himself lead out the Nore fleet to attack them.[2]

Two days later the actual attempt to negotiate was made, through the agency of Lord Northesk, captain of the *Monmouth*, a mild and popular man, whose crew, perhaps in consequence of his character, was one of the most disorderly in the whole fleet.[3] Northesk was taken

1. It will be remembered that the *Montague* remained in Yarmouth when the rest of the squadron set sail with Duncan, and that she was the first of the North Sea ships to sail to the Nore. Apparently the crew had weighed anchor so hurriedly that Mrs. Knight had no time to make her escape. It is possible, however, that she wished to stay with her husband until the *Montague* was sent to the Texel. Knight's instructions were as follows: "I am commanded to inform you by the Delegates of the Fleet, assembled on Board His Majestie's ship *Sandwich*, that they feel for your situation—and on the undermentioned Conditions you are permitted to accompany Mrs. Knight on shore. You are to return on Board your respective Ship in Three days after your Landing—and that you represent to Admiral Buckner that all the Officers are detained as Hostages for our Absent Delegates. And you are to assure yourself that you are to be considered for the Three Days on parole of Honour—that if (which we will not doubt) you should not return the Breach of Confidence to be resented as dem'd necessary by the Delegates of the Fleet" (A.S.I. 727, C 355).

2. Evidence for prisoner in Parker's court-martial (A.S.I. 5486). I have not found any other mention of the two vessels alleged to be bound to a hostile port.

3. See *Cunningham*, p. 61.

by the two chief delegates of the *Monmouth* to appear before the central committee on the *Sandwich*.[1] Again there was a great show of loyalty. As Northesk drew near to the flagship a band played "God save the King;" and when he went before the committee the delegates assured him of their allegiance to the Crown. When he arrived, Parker was drafting a letter, and the other members of the committee insisted that the letter should contain an allusion to the fact that they were neither Jacobins nor traitors.[2] Presumably this letter was a petition to the King—the seamen's final appeal to the highest authority in the land. Northesk, who was naturally anxious to do anything that might tend towards a peaceful settlement, agreed to take the petition ashore; but after reading it, he warned the committee that they must not expect a favourable answer, since their demands were unreasonable. The petition is important because it reflects the feelings of the delegates at this late period of the mutiny, and it deserves to be quoted at length:

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

May it please Your Majesty,

We your Majesty's faithful and loyal subjects serving on Board Your Majesty's Ships and Vessels at the Nore, with the greatest humility beg leave to lay our Petition before you, and hope as you have always avowed yourself to be the Father of your People, that our Petitions will be attended to. We have already laid a State(ment) of our Grievance before Your Majesty's Board of Admiralty, which Grievances we have reasons to imagine, were never properly stated to you, as we are sorry to have reason to remark the conduct of your present Ministers seems to be directed to the ruin and overthrow of your Kingdoms, and as their Duty to its good and advantage, a particular instance of which is the Council they have

1. *Schomberg* gives a detailed description of Northesk's mission. His account is circumstantial, but it may not be altogether reliable, as he has made mistakes elsewhere. In this particular case his description is so vivid that it seems to have come from an eye-witness.

2. Evidence at Parker's court-martial, u.s.

given Your Majesty with regard to us in proclaiming us Rebels, traitors and Outlaws. This Council if we had not been men particularly attached to Your Majesty's sacred person and Government, moderate but firm in our demands, and resolved with our lives to oppose your enemies by land and sea, would before now have driven us to some acts of Outrage and Revenge that might have shaken the very foundations of this Kingdom. We here give you a list of our Grievances, which List is accompanied by a simple but true Statement of the reasons we have of demanding them (1), and after thus making our Wants known to Your Majesty, we cannot longer ascribe a non-compliance with those Wants to Ministry, with you it now rests to determine whether you will or will not get a Redress of our Suffering. Your Majesty may depend that in Your Kingdom there is no more loyal and faithful Subject than we are, but at the same time we must assure Your Majesty till all those disgraceful Proclamations, which proscribe Outlaws are contradicted, till we have all our Grievances redress'd and till we have the same supply from and communication as usual with the shore, we shall consider ourselves masters of Nore Shipping. We have already determined how to act, and should be extremely sorry we should be forced to repose in another Country, which must evidently be the case if we are denounced as Outlaws in our own.

Your Majesty's Ministers seem to build their hopes on starving us into a compliance, but this is a wrong Idea. We have as much Provisions and Stores as will last Six Months. We were aware of their Intentions, and provided against them, but were it the reverse, and that we had but two days Provisions, we would sooner die in that state than give Up the least article of our Demands.

We shall trust to your Majesty's prudence in chuseing such Councillors and Advisors in the present and other affairs as will have the goods of their Country in view, and not like the present Ministers its Destruction. And with respect to our own Grievances, we shall allow 54 hours from 8 o'clock on Wednesday June the 7th 1797 to know Your Majesty's final Answer. We shall likewise make known to our fellow-subjects on shore the particulars of the Address and Your

1. Presumably the statement of grievances quoted above (p. 141 n.) was enclosed with this petition together with the commentary given in the "Address to the Nation."

Majesty's answer, so as to justify to them any Measure we may take in consequence of a Refusal.

With loyalty we remain,
Your Majesty's dutiful
Subjects, Seamen at the Nore.[1]

Northesk performed his mission faithfully. He went first to the Admiralty, and thence, in company with Spencer, to the Court. The petition was presented to the King; but Northesk was not allowed to return to the fleet. A refusal of the seamen's terms was conveyed by Captain Knight, who was bound by his parole to go back to the *Montague*. The refusal was inevitable, for the least compromise with the mutineers would have been entirely opposed to the policy of the Admiralty.

Still the seamen did not wholly abandon their attempt to negotiate. As late as 10 June the committees of several ships drew up a statement of the terms on which they would be willing to return to their duty and remain loyal to the Crown. The moderation of the terms shows that the cause of the authors was already failing. This last effort to negotiate was probably due to the failure of the plan of escape by sea. The mutineers realized that most of them must surrender, and it was desirable that they should surrender on the best possible terms. The demands were: that wages and bounties should be continued as usual; that the *Montague* should be repaired and docked; that the mutinous crews should not be scattered after their surrender; that officers who had given offence to their ships' companies should be removed; that no seaman should be arrested on suspicion as a traitor; and that marines should receive "such encourage-

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 1. The copy of the petition is docketed, "by Lord Northesk." There is another copy in A.S.I. 5125 (Petitions), with a list of grievances (nos. 1–6 of the demands quoted above), and a letter addressed to the nation, signed "Red for ever." This letter is quoted below, p. 301.

ment as would please them."[1] Of these six conditions the fourth alone amounted to a demand for a definite concession. The first would normally follow a return to duty. The last had already been granted. The second was quite irrelevant. The third was of little importance if only the crews were loyal, and in any case the seamen would probably have been willing to waive it for the sake of a free pardon. The fifth was unnecessary, for in regard to treason the seamen were in the position of ordinary citizens. The sedition acts gave power to the administration to arrest all persons suspected of treason. But the authorities on shore had no intention of imprisoning any seamen against whom they had no particular evidence. They only wanted to secure the ringleaders.

The project was as a matter of course refused. It was given to Captain Knight, who sent it to the Admiralty, although he must have known very well that his trouble was in vain.[2] It seems that the Board sent their answer by Admiral Peyton, the commander at the Downs; for they licensed him on the next day to communicate with the mutineers, to supply them with copies of the proclamations and acts of Parliament, and to give them an ultimatum, demanding unconditional surrender.[3] So this last effort towards compromise failed, and the seamen were left with the choice of surrender or escape, for there was no longer any chance of success.

It was already clear that the mutineers were in a bad plight. In spite of their bold criticisms of the ministry, their alleged store of provisions, and their boast that it was in their power to "have shaken the very foundations

1. A.S.M. 137, *Daniel Price's Pocket-Book*, paper 7. The crews which subscribed to this statement of demands were those of the *Montague*, *Nassau*, *Agamemnon*, *Lion*, *Standard*, *Inflexible* and others. It is noteworthy that the committee of the *Inflexible* were ready to make their peace, for the committee included some of the most active of the mutineers.

2. Captains' Letters, K 126 (Digest). The project was sent to Captain Knight by Parker: it may be supposed, therefore, that the delegates as a whole had given their assent to it.

3. A.S.M. 137, 11 June. A fresh copy of the proclamations was issued on 10 June. The original is in A.S.I. 4172.

of this Kingdom,"[1] they were really in distress. The measures of opposition had told upon them, and the confidence and threats expressed in their petitions were largely gasconade, intended to frighten the authorities on shore.

Their chief difficulty was undoubtedly the supply of provisions. The North Sea ships, indeed, were supplied for the expedition to the Texel, and it is stated in the papers of the *Repulse* that of most necessary articles that ship at least had enough to last for eight or ten weeks.[2] But the North Sea fleet was only half of the mutinous force, and the ships that had been stationed at the Nore since the beginning of the mutiny were scantily supplied. Their provisions had been stored in Sheerness, and they had hardly any stock on board. Moreover it is probable that the hundred or more merchantmen that were detained at the Nore were not all fully supplied, and in all probability one of the chief reasons for the breaking-up of the blockade was the difficulty of feeding the captive crews. The ships' companies that were comparatively well supplied had reasons for wishing to keep their stores. But even if they had distributed their possessions to the whole fleet they could not have prolonged the mutiny for many weeks.

And the condition of the North Sea fleet was not really so good as it would appear to be from the accounts of the *Repulse*; for when that vessel surrendered it was supplied with food and water from Sheerness.[3] It is not likely that provisions would be sent on board if the ship were

1. Petition to the King.

2. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 16. Account of provisions on 8 June: Purser's—bread for 10½ weeks; beef, flour and suet for 13½ weeks; pork for 13 weeks; butter for 9 weeks; cheese for 4½ weeks; sugar and rice for 4 weeks; pease for 8 weeks; oatmeal for 8½ weeks; molasses for 12 weeks; spirits and wine for 13 weeks; vinegar for 10½ weeks; candles for 16 weeks; slops wanting: hats, 3 cases; frocks, 2 bales; stockings, 1 bale. (No. 17) Gunner's stores: complete, none to spare; carpenter's stores: complete, none to spare; boatswain's stores: deficient. The stores were supposed to last for 10 weeks (see below, p. 223).

3. Buckner to Nepean, 11 June (C 370). Supplies were sent both to the *Repulse* and the *Ardent*.

already well stocked. However this may be, it is certain that some of the crews at the Nore were in the utmost straits for want of provisions; apparently the storeships which had been seized by the muineers had not gone far in relieving the wants of the fleet.

Parker had written that the fleet had supplies for six months, but when his ship surrendered, it was found that the provisions on board were only enough to last for two days.[1] The *Director* was in a similar case, and the committee were forced to borrow water from other ships. When the *Director* surrendered, there was found on board a letter, addressed to the *Montague* in these terms:

> Dr Brothers, We would be exceedingly obliged to you to spare us the small quantity of 5 Ton of Water for our present use, as we are greatly in want of this useful Article.
>
> Yours,
>
> Commee. of the *Director*.[2]

Thus in cutting off supplies from the fleet, the government had secured a great advantage. If they only sat still and waited, famine and the consequent disease would conquer the mutiny.

Probably the lack of provisions had a considerable part in inducing the delegates to attempt an escape by sea. It has already been said that this was one of the alternative courses open to the mutineers, and we shall see directly that such an escape was seriously contemplated. In the petition to the King the delegates distinctly threatened to put to sea if the government should refuse

1. Buckner to Nepean (C 378): "As many of the ships that are come in are greatly in want of provisions, particularly the *Sandwich*, which has only two days' supply on board, I beg leave, etc."

2. *Ibid.* There was another letter on board, also addressed to the *Montague* in nearly the same words; but "almost destitute" was substituted for "greatly in want." An answer written by Gregory, the delegate of the *Sandwich*, has been preserved (*ibid.*). Gregory informed the crew of the *Director* that they would be supplied with water and every other necessity in preparation for putting to sea. His letter was written on 9 June, and the allusion is evidently to the projected voyage to France or Ireland. Gregory was probably the president of the Committee of Internal Regulations, for that committee would presumably have charge of the supplies.

their terms; and as early as 2 June the English correspondent of the *Moniteur* had written: "Ils menacent même d'emmener leurs vaisseaux . . . . si on ne leur accorde toutes leurs demandes."

It was only natural that the ringleaders should wish to escape, and the wish need not in itself be regarded as treasonous. They had been outlawed by the Acts of Parliament, and if they surrendered they could have no hope of pardon. However much they may have been at fault for continuing the mutiny, they can hardly be blamed for preferring voluntary exile to death, even if their exile involved the theft of a considerable part of the fleet.[1]

The question of escape was evidently discussed with care, and an elaborate schedule was drawn up showing the proposed destinations of the various ships. The fleet was to be divided into five sections. One section, which would include the crews that were disposed to make their surrender, was to stay at the Nore. Another was to sail to the Texel. It might be imagined that the object of their voyage would be to help Duncan against the Dutch fleet; but the delegates probably had a different intention. A proposal was brought before the committee of the *Champion* that they should first sail to the Humber in order to make prizes, and go next to Texel, and then giving the slip to Duncan, make the coast of France.[2] From this fact it may be judged that the journey to the Texel was intended by some of the delegates as a blind

1. It should be noticed, however, that although the motive of those who intended to escape might not necessarily be treasonous, the idea of taking the ships to French or Irish ports had actually been suggested by political intriguers (see below, p. 332).

2. Papers of the *Inflexible*, no. 58 (A.S.M. 137). Probably the object of the *Champions* in making prizes would be to secure provisions. The *Champion* was one of the frigates stationed at the Nore since the beginning of the mutiny, and the crew must have been ill-supplied with food and water. According to evidence given before the magistrates at Sheerness the proposal was rejected by the committee of the *Champion*. It seems to have been sent from the *Sandwich* as a circular to the whole fleet. (Evidence of Hawkes, Norfolk and Elliott, of the *Champion*, A.S.I. 3685).

to cover the real objective of the fleet, and possibly they hoped to win over the few ships that remained loyal to Duncan. Two other sections of the fleet were deputed to sail respectively to Cromarty Bay and the Shannon, evidently by way of the northern seas; and the fifth contingent was to go to some place called by the seamen "New Colony." As the voyage was never made, the actual position of "New Colony" does not appear.[1] Stow—an agent of the Admiralty who collected the papers of the *Inflexible*—thought that it was intended to be in France, and that the provisions for ten weeks were meant to last while the delegates were negotiating with the French government. But if once the fleet succeeded in putting to sea it would reach the French coast, apart from accidents, in a few days' time, and the seamen would hardly anticipate that the French government would keep them waiting for two months before allowing them to land.[2] The term "Colony" and the proposed duration of the stores both seem to indicate a more distant goal—probably America. Two years before, Southey, Coleridge and Lovell had formed a plan of setting up their home on the banks of the Susquehanna. And the

1. These particulars are taken from the papers of the *Inflexible*, no 57. *Neale* (p. 228) gives a list, taken from I know not what source, that is similar in some respects. The proposals in his list are that the whole fleet should sail: (i) to Ireland, (ii) to France, (iii) to America, (iv) to any foreign port; or that the ships should go to different places: *Standard* to Cherbourg; *Monmouth*, *Lion*, *Nassau*, *Sandwich* and *Director* to Cromarty Firth; *Proserpine*, *Hound*, *Inflexible*, *Comet* to the colonies. Perhaps "the colonies" in his list is a corrupt reading of "New Colony."

2. If the mutineers had succeeded in reaching the French coast with any ships of the North Sea fleet they would probably have been well received and rewarded. Strictly according to custom, it would be the duty of the French government to send back the mutineers for trial, although they could not be expected to yield up their enemy's ships which fate had delivered into their hands. When the mutineers of the *Hermione* took their ship into a Spanish port in the West Indies (in September 1797) they were rewarded and protected by the Spanish government, although in addition to the crime of mutiny they were guilty of murder and of barbarity that was scarcely human.

leading mutineers seem to have adopted a similar scheme, of founding a colony or settlement in some untenanted part of the American continent, remembering that America was the home of liberty and believing that they would be welcomed there as men who had resisted and escaped from oppression.

There is no doubt that the delegates really intended to take at least a part of the fleet to sea. In the evidence given in the courts-martial[1] there are very frequent references to this intention, which show that a large number of the ringleaders were anxious to make their escape. It would be tedious to review the whole of the evidence, but a few examples will show how seriously the scheme was debated.

The committee of the *Swan* sloop debated the question of an escape to France,[2] and Rearden, the president of the committee, consulted a pilot in the matter. He tried to persuade the pilot to undertake the journey to France or Ireland, and asked him to estimate the price for which the ship could be sold.[3]

The *Leopard* was the first ship of Duncan's squadron to break away from the mutiny and submit to the authorities. But there were on board many violent mutineers who would gladly have taken the ship to a foreign port: indeed it is not unlikely that their insistence on this desperate policy drove the more moderate part of the crew to take the lead in overthrowing the rule of the delegates. When Lord Northesk had gone ashore with the petition to the King, George Shave, a delegate of the *Leopard*, announced to the crew that if the petitions were not answered within forty-eight hours the fleet would sail to a foreign port, and that any seaman who objected should

1. A.S.I. 5486.
2. Evidence received by Buckner, and reported by him to the Admiralty. A.S.I. 727, C 397.
3. *Ibid.*, C 378.

be "made an example of to the ship's company."[1] Another delegate, Ross, suggested Bantry Bay as a rendezvous for the fleet.[2] A third proposed to take the *Leopard* to France, but he was silenced by Copey, a boatswain's mate, who swore that no enemy should have the ship.[3] Copey's own inclination was to go to the West Indies, where, as he said, the fleet would find "wood, wine and water."[4]

When the project was being discussed on the *Sandwich*, Gregory, one of the most prominent of the mutineers, suggested that the *Sandwich* should remain behind with the seamen who refused to put to sea. But he drew a dreadful picture of the fate which would befall these men when they came under the power of the government.[5] At another time he went on board an American ship, which had been held up at the Nore, and questioned the pilot as to the practicability of sailing to Ireland or America.[6]

The spirit of the ringleaders at this time is clearly reflected in a conversation between Holding, a delegate of the *Sandwich*, and Bray, the master, who was put in command of the ship in the early part of the mutiny. The account of the interview may best be given as Bray related it at Holding's trial:

> One night, about ten o'clock, Peter Holding had the watch on the quarter-deck. I asked him what more they wanted. He said they were going to abolish the Articles of War to share prize-money in a different manner to what it was at present, and to have a trial by jury. A few nights afterwards I met Peter Holding on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, about nine or ten o'clock. I asked him what they were going to do now. He said, "We shall take the ships to sea." I said, "As the buoys are now taken away you will get all the ships on shore before you get down the Channel." He

1. Trial of mutineers of the *Leopard*, Lapthorne's evidence.
2. *Ibid.*, evidence of Thomas Wood.
3. *Ibid.*, evidence of Morgan Jones.
4. *Ibid.*, evidence of Thomas Wood.
5. Evidence of Lieutenant Forbes at Gregory's trial.
6. Evidence of William Wilson, pilot of the American ship.

replied to me again "We will get on shore as well as we can and save our lives." I said, "If they catch you on shore, every soul of you will be hanged." Says he, "We can go with the ships to many islands I know." I made a reply, "It will be peace soon with all Europe, and each power will send out squadrons after you and take you up as pirates and hang you without mercy." I asked him then if he was married. He told me, Yes, and had a wife and three or four children, I believe, at Lynn in Norfolk. I expostulated with him on the impropriety of his conduct. How could he go and leave his wife or children to starve? For certainly they must perish in the streets. He said he did not care for either wife or children or any relations whatever, nor his country. "We have," said he, "embarked in this glorious cause, and we will go through with it."

The political importance of these plans will be discussed later. At present it is enough to say that although some of the delegates may have been stirred by treasonous motives, others may have consented to the scheme through sheer necessity. If they escaped to sea they could not find a refuge in any country that was friendly to England: their only hope, therefore, was in betaking themselves to the enemy, to the discontented population of Ireland, or to some distant part of the earth.

Such was the plan of the mutineers for evading the power of the government. But it was easier to devise the plan than to carry it into effect. The buoys and lights had been removed from the Thames and from the neighbouring coasts; and it is unnecessary to emphasize again the difficulty of taking large ships out to sea in the absence of these guides. It is clear that the mutineers were hard hit by the removal of the buoys and lights, for they tried to prevent Captain Bloomfield from carrying out the enterprise. When the delegates learnt his intention they made an attempt to raise four volunteers from each ship, and on 8 June they sent Hockless, the quartermaster of the *Sandwich*, with a party of mutineers, on board the *Ranger* sloop, with orders to go down the Queen's Channel and protect the buoys and beacons.

When Hockless found that he was too late he was furious with anger, but announced that he was able to pilot the fleet down without the marks. Fortunately his claim was not put to the test. Although this expedition was a failure, it serves to show both the importance of Captain Bloomfield's work, and the firm intention of escape entertained by the delegates.[1]

When the idea of escape by sea had first been raised, the channel of the Thames was still marked out and the sea still accessible. It is probable that at the time when the buoys were removed the plan of escape had already been definitely framed. The delegates would thus realize fully the misfortune that had come upon them, and their confidence must have been seriously shaken. However, the majority of them still held to the policy of escape, and were inclined to hazard the passage of the Thames mouth. On 9 June[2] the signal for sailing was actually made on the *Sandwich*, and was answered by the whole fleet. But it is a remarkable fact that not a single crew showed any inclination to obey the signal.

Cunningham has suggested[3] that the order to weigh anchor was not seriously meant. Parker is rumoured to have said that he himself was chiefly instrumental in preventing the fleet from deserting to the enemy.[4] But there is reason to believe that he openly advocated the removal of the fleet to Holland; and that he had made preparations, in case the mutineers as a whole should refuse to accompany him, for his own escape in the

1. Papers of the *Inflexible*, no. 39.

2. This is the date generally accepted (*e.g.*, it is given by Sir J. K. Laughton in his article on Parker in *D.N.B*); but *Cunningham* (p. 72), who had an inconvenient habit of taking two days together in his chronological account, does not make it clear whether the signal was given on the 8th or the 9th. I find no mention of the incident in the dispatches from Sheerness. The signal was the usual signal for preparing for sea—one gun and the loosening of the fore top-sail. After Hockless's return from the Swin on 7 June, Parker announced that the fleet would sail within 54 hours from eight o'clock of the following morning, *i.e.*, before 2 p.m. on the 10th (Bray's evidence, u.s.).

3. *Cunningham*, p. 90.

4. *Trial, Life and Anecdotes*, p. 62.

Swan.[1] It has been shown that the ringleaders had good cause for wishing to put to sea. It has been shown that their plans had been carefully prepared, and that at least before the sinking of the buoys they really intended to put to sea if there were no hope of reconciliation. Is it not, then, reasonable to suppose that this was a last desperate effort to achieve the safety of the fleet; that the delegates still thought it advisable at all costs to make the attempt, and to risk the shoals of the Thames mouth? Some of them did afterwards escape in smaller vessels; but they would certainly have received more consideration from a foreign government if they had come as the commanders of an armada with several ships of the line, instead of arriving, as they actually did, as fugitives in fishing-smacks.

No document remains to show why the order for weighing anchor was not obeyed. Possibly none of the mutineer-commanders or pilots was willing to undertake the responsibility of piloting the fleet without the guidance of the buoys.[2] More probably, the chief reason was that the majority of the seamen refused to leave the Nore. A good deal has been said of the opinions of the common seamen at the Nore, of their increasing discontent with the needless continuance of the mutiny, and of the system of terror by which they were held down. The time had come, at length, when they must decide whether they would accept the position of outlaws, and go with their leaders into exile, or whether they would abandon the mutiny and put themselves at the King's mercy.

Apparently Parker had foreseen the difficulty caused by their opposition. For several days he had been making great efforts to keep their favour. It was prob-

1. *Cunningham*, u.s.

2. There were pilots on some of the ships. A letter from the pilot of the *Director* to his wife is mentioned in the *Digest* (Pro. H 300), and most of the North Sea ships would have pilots. Probably they were either opposed to the mutiny, or afraid of risking the passage out to sea. According to Bray, of the *Sandwich*, pilots were sent to the ships of the Nore fleet on 26 May.

ably as much to give them confidence as to please the public on shore that the delegates had continually asserted their loyalty. It was probably on their account, in large measure, that the whole fleet fired a salute on Restoration Day (29 May),[1] and flew the Union Jack and the royal ensign at the mast-head; that Hatherall, the chaplain of the *Sandwich*, had been allowed to go aboard on the King's birthday (4 June), and to preach loyalty to the crew;[2] that the blockade had been explained as a means of hastening the end of the mutiny, so that the fleet might the sooner go to Duncan's help;[3] and that Parker now announced that his intention in putting to sea was to sail to the Texel and fight against the Dutch.[4] On the previous day (8 June) he had made a tour of the fleet, accompanied by the other members of the central committee, and had addressed the various crews, trying at the same time to secure their favour and to prepare their minds for the escape to sea. Captain Knight had returned to the Nore on 7 June,[5] bringing with him the refusal of the petition, and copies of the proclamations

1. *Cunningham*, p. 49. The whole fleet fired nineteen guns. Cunningham gives the date wrongly as 30 May. It was on 29 May 1660 that Charles II entered London. See also A.S.M. 137, Marsden to Nepean (Rochester, 29 May): "When the salute was fired to-day the red flag was at the main, and the royal standard at the fore. Such is their insolence."

2. *Cunningham*, p. 59. Mr. Hannay says that Hatherall took as his text, Job xxvii, 5: "God forbid that I should justify you; till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." Cunningham gives the date of the sermon rightly, but he says that the King's birthday was on 5 June.

3. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 26. The delegates said that the news of the preparation of the Dutch fleet decided them to blockade the Thames, so "that they might be able with the more expedition to face the enemies of their country."

4. Evidence of Capt. Knight at the court-martial. The same pretext was put forward to justify the "Final Determination" (Papers of the *Champion*, no. 20, 1 June, A.S.M. 137).

5. *Schomberg*, vol. iii, p. 28, and *Cunningham*, p. 89. In *Ann. Reg.*, p. 217, it is wrongly stated that no answer was sent to the petition. I suppose that Knight returned to the fleet on 7 June, for Northesk only left Sheerness on the 6th, and Parker read the proclamations on the 8th. Moreover the petition brought by Northesk was dated 7 June (presumably the date of receipt), and there is a docket stating that it was answered on the same day.

and acts of Parliament that had been issued in opposition to the mutiny. He had given these papers to the delegates, and the delegates tried to turn them to their own account. Parker took them with him when he visited the different ships. He read extracts from them, presumably those which showed the greatest hostility to the mutiny, and added his own comments.[1] But he evidently feared the leaven of loyalty among the seamen, for he was careful either to distort or entirely to ignore the offers of pardon. The certainty of a free pardon was the one thing needed to bring back the bulk of the mutineers to their duty. Parker hoped that they could be kept in ignorance of the offers of pardon, and tried by his harangues so to inflame their minds against the government that they would prefer desertion to surrender. Other ringleaders helped him in the mission. The documents were probably read and expounded, either by Parker or some other member of the central committee, on every ship at the Nore. Gregory, of the *Sandwich*, who was always in the forefront of any mutinous enterprise, visited the *Brilliant* and read the Act of Parliament, the Proclamation of Pardon, and the letter addressed to the Nore fleet from Curtis's squadron. In the words of John Goodfellow, boatswain of the *Brilliant*:

> When he had finished reading the Act of Parliament he looked round and said, "None of your grievances are redressed." Then he read His Majesty's Pardon, and at the end of that, he said "This can be altered in the course of four hours. Should you go on shore you are liable to be hung or shot." And he said, to the best of my knowledge, "And any of you that has a mind to go on shore to your tyrannical" —I think the word was "country," but the word "tyrannical" was mentioned,—"you shall go ashore with a flag of truce."

This was very nearly the language that Gregory had previously used on the *Sandwich*. Two men of the

1. *Cunningham*, p. 73.

Brilliant offered to go on shore, and Gregory ordered them to be put in irons.[1]

Houston, a mutineer of the *Director*, prevented Lieut. Roscoe from reading the Proclamation, but read his own version of it on the *Director* and on several other ships. He explained that the words, "We have therefore thought fit" were "altogether a take in," and that the promised pardon was "no pardon at all."[2]

On the *Hound* sloop, Captain Wood, who was on very friendly terms with the ship's company, himself read the Act and the Proclamation, and the resolutions of the meeting of merchants which had been given to him by Admiral Buckner. But as he was reading, the boat-load of delegates came on board, and one of the delegates, Appleyard, whose name appears very often in the reports of the courts-martial, interrupted him. The scene is vividly described by Captain Wood in his evidence at Appleyard's trial:

> Appleyard came up to me, took the proclamation out of my hand, and told them it was a pack of flummery; and pointing to one part,[3] he said that would hang them all. They had nothing to do but stick true to the cause they had embarked in, and they would bring them through it: that they had waggon-loads of the same papers on board the *Sandwich*. Finding he was not attended to, he turned round to the people and said they were a set of damn'd rascals, who were led by the nose by their Captain. He then went towards the gang-way saying that he would go on board the *Sandwich* and that they would sink us. He was then shoved or struck by one of my men, named John Driscoll, off the gun as he was going into the boat. He then repeated his threats that he would go and they should sink us, alleging to the delegates, that were then on board the *Hound* from the different ships, that they were a set of cowardly rascals on board the *Hound*; that they had run from their Admiral at sea; that they had sworn to be true to them, and now they wanted to leave them. He then went on board the *Sandwich*.

1. Evidence at Gregory's trial.
2. A.S.I. 727, C 380.
3. The clause excepting ringleaders from the pardon

The delegates met with similar rebuffs on other ships. Parker had a cold reception on the *Ardent*. He was reproved by Lieutenant Young for misrepresenting the proclamations, and the Lieutenant was supported by the crew. The proclamations only made the crew more anxious to surrender, and within two days the *Ardent* had deserted the mutinous fleet.[1] In one account of Parker's life it is said that even on the *Sandwich* the proposal to go to Holland was rejected, and that the crew of the *Nassau*, when they heard the suggestion, "one and all said, 'No, we'll be damned if we leave Old England whatever happen to us.'"[2] This saying, whether it be accurately reported or not, may be taken as an expression, in nautical language, of the general feeling of the fleet.[3] The delegates had done their utmost to persuade their followers that the only hope of safety for any one of them lay in an escape to sea. But they failed. The seamen realized that after their surrender only the ringleaders would be punished; and for themselves, since there was no longer any hope of gaining anything by a continuance of the mutiny, their whole desire was to make their peace with the nation. The delegates may have succeeded in mystifying the crews of some ships, and in arousing a vague feeling of suspicion; but they could not win any support for their wild project of escape.

The seamen were unwilling to abandon themselves, for the sake of a few ringleaders, to a doubtful and hazardous voyage. In the crisis the majority at last had an opportunity of asserting their wishes, and Parker and the

1. Lieutenant Young's evidence before the magistrates, A.S.I. 3685.

2. *Trial, Life and Anecdotes*, p. 78. *Cunningham* (p. 74) says the crew of the *Sandwich* were already chafing against the authority of the delegates.

3. I think that Mr. Hannay is right in observing that "the dislike of all Englishmen for an upstart was beginning to tell against the mutineer leader." Even before the end of May, Parker's popularity was apparently declining, for Marsden wrote (on 29 May): "I shall not be much surprised to hear that they have hanged him by one of his own yard-ropes, for his assumed importance begins to give considerable umbrage" (A.S.M. 137).

delegates found that their authority was passing from them. The signal for weighing anchor was in fact a signal for the dissolution of the mutiny. From this time forward in writing the history of the mutiny it is only necessary to tell how one ship after another surrendered, how day by day the rebellious force was weakened, until by the striking of the last red flag it was known that the revolt was at an end.

The collapse began in an interesting way, very soon after the unsuccessful attempt to put to sea. Either on the same day or on the day before, Buxton, master of the *Hope* lugger, and a seaman, Thomas Harrison, of the *Industry*, had gone out to the Nore, taking with them copies of the acts of Parliament and the resolutions of the London merchants. In this way they defeated Parker's efforts to keep the mass of the mutineers in ignorance of the real attitude of the nation towards them. The papers were read on the *Repulse*, and possibly on other ships as well. On the crew of the *Repulse* at least the reading of these papers had the effect of fixing their determination to escape from the fleet and make their surrender.[1] But perhaps such a stimulus was hardly needed. Since the failure of the attempt to reach the open sea the only course left to the mutineers was to surrender. Some of the ringleaders might wish to postpone the submission so that they might themselves have time to escape in smaller vessels. But the ordinary seaman had no such occasion for delay. It was to his interest to set himself free from the mutiny at once, while there remained to him some hope of pardon.

For the seamen of the *Repulse* this hope had become a certainty. Nevertheless they were not the first to break away from the mutiny. Among the crew of the *Leopard* there were many who were secretly opposed to the mutiny, and on 9 June, the first lieutenant, Robb, who had been kept on board as a hostage, was informed of

1. Pro. B 73 (Digest) : letter from George Boyne.

their strength. Evidently his confinement was not very strict, for he was able during the night to organize the loyal men for resistance and to make preparations for recovering the command of the ship. On the following morning he unmasked the guns, which had been trained inwards during the night, and announced his intention of taking the ship away from the Nore. The mutinous faction did not yield without a struggle, and in the fighting a midshipman was mortally wounded. But the loyal party were in a great majority. The mutineers were overpowered; nearly a score of them were imprisoned; and the ship was cut adrift. She ran aground while she was still within range of the fleet, and most of the ships opened fire on her, for the fear of the delegates was still upon the seamen who remained at the Nore.[1]

The *Repulse* very soon followed the *Leopard*. The crew had once been "impressed with the most sensible feeling of gratitude" towards the central committee, and

1. *Cunningham* (pp. 74, 75). *Brenton* (vol. i, p. 435). Their accounts are very nearly the same, except that Cunningham says that nineteen mutineers were imprisoned and Brenton gives the number as eighteen. They both give the date as 10 June, but there can be no doubt that these ships really escaped on the 9th. Lieutenant Young, of the *Ardent*, said that the *Repulse* escaped on the 9th, just after Parker's visit to the *Ardent*. Young had reason to remember the date, for he took his own ship up the river a few hours later (Young's evidence, A.S.I. 3685). In a letter written at 10 p.m. on 9 June (C 368) Buckner said that the *Leopard* had sailed at 6 p.m. The *Leopard* ran aground near the left bank of the river, not far from Leigh, and was under a "smart fire" for some time. In a secret letter from Nepean, written on 10 June (A.S.O. 1352, p. 131), it was said that the firing had been "very heavy," but that apparently "no material mischief had been done." And again on 12 June (*ibid.*, p. 141) Nepean wrote to Bridport that there had been a "heavy cannonade from the nearest ships," but that the *Leopard* and the *Repulse* "had not suffered much injury." It would seem that the firing was energetic but inaccurate, and it is possible that in the cases both of the *Leopard* and of the *Repulse* the shots from ships were deliberately sent wide (see below, p. 236). The right date of this incident is given by *Schomberg* and *Clowes* (who generally follows Schomberg's account where it differs from other authorities). *Hannay* and *D.N.B.* (vol. xxiii, p. 268) have adopted the date given by *Cunningham* and *Brenton*. Captain Alms, of the *Repulse*, wrote that only one shot had struck the ship—*i.e.*, in the hull (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 30). But according to Buckner the sails and rigging were considerably damaged (C 368).

had been " determined not to be influenc'd by the artful insinuations " of their oppressors, nor to be appeased until their grievance had been complied with.[1] But now they were almost to a man opposed to the mutiny. They surrendered voluntarily, and it would seem without any dissent, to the first lieutenant (the captain had been sent ashore at Yarmouth). There was a pilot on board, and he was ordered to take the ship up the Medway. He said that the tide was against them; but the attempt was made. As the pilot had foreseen, the *Repulse* ran aground while she was still within range of the fleet. The two nearest ships, the *Monmouth* and the *Director*, opened fire on her, and other ships joined in the attack. She remained under fire for about an hour and a half.[2] One of the lieutenants was badly wounded; but the ship was not greatly damaged, and at length she drifted free and escaped to Sheerness.[3]

Parker was very active in encouraging the mutineers to fire on the *Repulse*. He went himself on board the *Director*. At first he ordered the crew to slip the cables and go alongside the *Repulse*. They refused to obey his command, and they also refused him the use of a boat which he wanted in order to go to the *Repulse* with a flag of truce. He himself put a spring on the cable of the *Director*, to bring her guns into position, and he superintended the firing. Afterwards he boarded the *Monmouth*, and, according to one witness at the court-

1. See above, p. 179.

2. *Cunningham* and *Brenton*, u.s.; and A.S.I. 727, C 368. Brenton, who was in the fleet at the time, said that the firing lasted an hour and forty minutes. Cunningham and Buckner said that it lasted more than an hour. The seamen who gave evidence at the court-martial seemed to think that the *Repulse* was only stuck for about half an hour. Buckner said that some of the lower deck guns of the *Repulse* were thrown off to lighten the ship.

3. The rigging and sails were considerably cut, but the hull was not seriously injured (Buckner). The lieutenant who was wounded was Lieut. Delanoe. His wounds necessitated the amputation of one leg, and he was compensated with a pension. Apparently he was promoted for his services, for he was mentioned on 27 Sept. as Captain Delanoe (Orders in Council, Digest).

martial, he worked one of the guns himself.[1] He had reason to see to the efficiency of the firing, for the gunners of the *Monmouth* were deliberately aiming wide.[2] Evidently Parker was in a state of intense excitement. Before leaving the *Sandwich* he exclaimed "that he would go on board of the *Director*, get a spring on her cable, and if his father was on board that ship (pointing to the *Repulse*) he would blow her to hell, for that was where she belonged to."[3] On the other ships he used similar expressions, and he swore roundly when the *Repulse* began to drift with the tide away from the Nore Sand.

It is not hard to understand Parker's excitement. If the volunteer fleet in the upper river, the ships and gunboats in the harbour, and a squadron from the sea, had come to fight against the mutineers, he might have faced the danger more calmly. But now the force on which he had relied was breaking up, and the danger was from his own followers. The tables were turned upon him. He had headed a revolt which threatened to deprive the nation of its chief security against invasion. Now the leaders of the revolt found themselves in turn deserted, forsaken moreover by the men who had come only a few days before to reinforce their strength. They must have known, or at least suspected, that the escape of the *Leopard* was the beginning of a general collapse; that the

1. Evidence of Lieut. Flatt, William Levingston (boatswain of the *Director*), Samuel Helard (carpenter of the *Director*), Thomas Barry (seaman of the *Monmouth*), John Summerland (boatswain's mate of the *Monmouth*) and Jacob Swanston (gunner of the *Sandwich*), at the court-martial (A.S.I. 5486). In the Solicitor's Letters (A.S.I. 3685) there is a great amount of evidence in regard to the firing. Most of the shots were fired from the *Monmouth* and the *Director*. The evidence of Thomas Barry, who said that Parker himself fired one of the forecastle guns of the *Monmouth*, was not altogether borne out by other witnesses; but there is no doubt that Parker gave the order to fire, and showed himself extremely anxious to destroy the *Repulse*. Several witnesses agreed as to the violence of his language and conduct.

2. *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 291 (ed. 1837).

3. Evidence of Jacob Swanston. He was nominally a witness for the defence, but his evidence rather strengthened the case for the prosecution.

feeling of the majority on almost every ship in the fleet was against the mutiny.

The order to fire may have been given with the object of continuing the system of terror. The delegates may have thought that if the *Leopard* and the *Repulse* were thoroughly punished for their desertion, the rest of the fleet might at least hold together until their plans of escape were matured. They were also following the precedent set in the case of the other ships that had escaped—the *San Fiorenzo* and the *Clyde*, the *Serapis* and the *Discovery*. But when these ships deserted there was still hope that the mutiny would be in some measure successful. That hope was now gone. It is probable therefore that the firing was largely due to the blind fury of men who had staked their fortunes and lives in a desperate enterprise, and suddenly realized their failure and helplessness.

The ringleaders had reason to be alarmed. The downfall of their power had begun; and the events of the next few days showed how accurate had been Marsden's prediction: "After all, I cannot help thinking it probable that they will all, or almost all, come in, upon finding that there is nothing more got by parleying, and that Government mean to act with firmness and decision. . . . There is so much division among them that their real force is not formidable."[1] The prophecy would have come true earlier if the fleet had not been reinforced from Duncan's squadron. But even the seamen of the North Sea fleet, within a few days of their arrival, realized the futility of the mutiny and the desirability of surrender.

There was no long interval between the escape of the *Repulse* and the next desertion. It was late in the afternoon of 9 June when the *Repulse* finally passed out of range of the fleet. At midnight the *Ardent* left the Nore and sailed to Sheerness. The crew had for some time been inclined to surrender, for when Parker visited

1. A.S.M. 137, u.s.

the ship two days before they had given him a cold reception. As the *Ardent* was moving away there was some interchange of shot with the *Monmouth*, but apparently the firing was not effective.[1]

Only the vaguest rumours remain to show what happened on the next two days (10 and 11 June). The authorities at Sheerness were too busy and too anxious to spend time in writing full reports. But this is clear: that the revolt was breaking up rapidly, and that the mutinous faction were making their last stand. On many ships there was fighting between the two parties. The red flags were struck on 10 June, and the proper colours were hoisted:[2] on the 11th, the flags at the Nore were flying half-mast high.[3] The ships that still remained at the Nore must have been in the utmost confusion. All authority was in abeyance: mutineers were preparing to escape to the open sea, loyalists to escape up the river. At any moment a quarrel might arise which would lead to a general *mêlée*.

Apparently few ships—possibly none at all—escaped on 11 June, for nearly twenty vessels were still at the Nore the next morning. But from the few facts that emerge from the general confusion it may be judged that the loyal party on several ships tried to take possession. Buckner reported on the 11th that the crew of the *Hound* were trying to escape, and that thirty of them had been removed to the *Sandwich*.[4] It seems to have been on the

1. *Cunningham*, pp. 76, 77. Buckner mentioned on 11 June (C 370) that the *Ardent* had been supplied with food and water. The *Ardent* must have escaped at midnight, 9–10 June, for Nepean mentioned the incident in a letter written at the following midnight (A.S.O. 1352, p. 131), and he had received news of the escape in a letter from Buckner written on the 10th (*ibid.*, p. 135). See also Lieut. Young's evidence, A.S.I. 3685.

2. A.S.O. 1352, p. 131. The colours were probably changed when Captain Knight set out with the project of terms of surrender (see above, p. 219).

3. Buckner to Nepean, C 370. It is not easy to understand the reason of this fresh disposition of the flags; nor is it clear whether the flags throughout the fleet were at half-mast.

4. Buckner to Nepean, C 370.

same day that a struggle took place on the *Swan* sloop—at one time a hotbed of mutiny. Some of the delegates had gone on board in order to test the feeling of the crew. They ordered a division, sending their supporters to starboard and the others to larboard. The majority of the crew went to larboard; but the mutineers, though they had little hope, had lost none of their vigour. They went below, armed themselves, and drove their enemies from the ship. The fugitives rowed to the *Isis* frigate. They found that the crew of the *Isis* were at war among themselves—a contest in which the officers, supported apparently by the marines, were overcome by the mutineers.[1] So on this day (11 June) in the fleet remaining at the Nore, the delegates prevailed. But their success was not lasting.

When the next day dawned only two red flags were seen at the Nore.[2] On all the other ships blue flags were flying as a sign of peace. It is true that several more red flags were run up during the day, but their temporary absence showed that the opinion of almost the whole fleet was wavering. The reappearance of the red flags was explained by Admiral Pasley as being due to the publication of a final message from the Admiralty.[3] It appears from the minutes of the Board, that on 11 June Admiral Peyton was authorized to visit the fleet, taking with him copies of the Proclamation and acts of Parliament; and to announce once more that the mutineers could only make

1. *Cunningham*, p. 90. He is not sure of the date, and suggests 13 June. But Buckner mentioned a struggle on the *Isis* on 11 June (C 370) and I take it that this is the event to which Cunningham refers. Cunningham adds that the *Isis* submitted on 14 June, on account of a rumour that Gower was bringing a fleet down the river to suppress the mutiny.

2. Pasley to Nepean, 13 June (C 372). Pasley said that at noon there were two red flags, and that the others were hoisted at three o'clock in the afternoon. In a letter received at the Admiralty on 11 June, Buckner wrote that all the ships at the Nore had hoisted blue or white flags (the earlier news of this event was sent by semaphore). It seemed that the proper colours were flying from the time of Knight's departure until the time at which the result of his mission was published in the fleet.

3. *Ibid.*

peace by an unconditional surrender.[1] He would naturally deliver his message on the morning of 12 June, and it was apparently communicated to the fleet by Buckner in the afternoon. It may be supposed therefore that the fresh display of red flags was a result of his visit; that the ringleaders were still unwilling to put themselves entirely at the King's mercy, and still had enough authority to enforce their opinions on the seamen. They must have known that the mutiny had already failed; but delay was better for them than immediate surrender. In the one case they might at least prepare for escape, in the other they would go deliberately to meet a stern retribution.

Not all of the delegates, however, were successful in restraining the loyal inclination of their crews. Five of the two-decked ships kept their blue flags flying, and three of them escaped on 12 June.[2] The rest remained mutinous for a few hours longer. But on the next morning not a single red flag was to be seen at the Nore.[3] It can never be known what a period of violence and turmoil was connoted by the appearance of the blue flags. Those who passed through the mutiny contented themselves with saying that there was fighting on most of the ships before the crews surrendered. The surrender, in fact, was double: the mutinous faction had first to be defeated by the loyalists, and afterwards the crew as a whole had to make its submission to the authorities.

At length on every ship the mutineers were overcome by force or by despair. Counsels of peace everywhere prevailed; and on 13 June the mutiny virtually came to an end. According to the official reports from Sheerness sixteen ships at the least surrendered on that day or on the following morning.[4] On 15 June Buckner announced

1. See above, p. 219.
2. C 372.
3. *Ibid.*
4. C 372-378.

that the last vessel, the *Director,* had submitted;[1] and Keith, asking leave to retire from Sheerness, was able to write with confidence: "The mutiny which prevailed among the ships at the Nore seems to be quite extinguished."[2]

Nevertheless the authorities on shore were not free from anxiety, although several capable officers had come to Buckner's help.[3] The very fact that the mutiny had collapsed with such dramatic suddenness must have some apprehension of a fresh outbreak. Moreover, although the rising was at an end, the mutineers were at hand in great numbers, many of them still fiercely hostile to the government, and in a desperate mood. In almost every ship there were several men who had been excepted from the general pardon. The crews had to be kept strictly

1. C 380.

2. C 379. The following list may help to give a clearer impression of the speed with which the mutiny collapsed. Nearly all the dates are taken from the official dispatches, but it should be noticed that in some cases (*e.g.,* that of the *Iris*) the actual pardon was not received until the day after the surrender.

Surrender of the ships concerned in the Nore mutiny:

29 May, *Clyde, San Fiorenzo* and several gunboats.

2 June ? *Firm.*

5 June, *Serapis* and *Discovery.*

10 June, *Leopard* and *Repulse.*

11 June, *Ardent.*

13 June, *Agamemnon, Nassau, Standard* (these are presumably the three ships that escaped on 12 June), and *Vestal.*

14 June, *Iris, Sandwich, Monmouth, Isis, Brilliant, Proserpine, Champion,* Pylades, Swan, Comet, Ranger, Tysiphone* and *Grampus.*†

15 June, *Inflexible* and *Director.*

? *Montague,*‡ *Belliqueux,*‡ *Lion* and *Inspector.*

* The *Champion* surrendered on the 13th and received a pardon on the next day.

† Pasley wrote on 14 June (C 374) that Captain Caine had gone on board, and was sailing to the harbour.

‡ The submission of the *Belliqueux* and the *Montague* is not mentioned, but Buckner said on 15 June that the crew of the *Belliqueux* were anxious to surrender; and *Cunningham* (p. 80) says that white flags were hoisted on these two ships and the *Inflexible* on the 15th. Buckner wrote on 15 June (C 378) that the command of the *Montague* had been given to the lieutenants, but that the ship was "by no means in a quiet state."

3. Besides Keith, Sir Charles Grey, and several captains and junior officers, Buckner was helped by Sir Erasmus Gower, captain of the *Neptune,* who went to Sheerness on 11 June (C 370), and by Admiral Pasley, who had come from Yarmouth at about the same time, after settling the disturbances among the crews that remained there.

to their ships, and those who were known or suspected to have been ringleaders were removed to prison. Eighty prisoners were lodged in the *Eolus* hulk;[1] and Spencer had arranged with General Innes, the commander at Chatham, for the accommodation of prisoners in that town.[2] Nevertheless the number of men arrested was so great that the problem of keeping them in safe confinement gave serious trouble to the authorities. One of the agents of the government wrote on 16 June from Sheerness: "Notwithstanding you make yourselves so easy in Town, I can assure you that things here are very far from being in a perfectly tranquil state."[3] It is not hard to understand the concern of the officials when it is remembered that they were suddenly called upon to deal with more than four hundred prisoners who had all been active mutineers; to take measures for the proper discipline of some thousands of other men who had lately known no other authority than that of the delegates; and to see to the provisioning of several ships that were almost destitute of supplies. It is an evidence of excellent management on the part of the officials at Sheerness that a complete settlement was brought about without any further tumult or disorder.

1. C 381.
2. A.S.M. 137, Spencer to Nepean 29 May (Rochester). Some were sent to the *Eagle* prison-ship (Minutes 122, Digest; and C 479). Parker with other mutineers was lodged in Maidstone Gaol; and all the prisons in the neighbourhood of Sheerness probably contained seamen who had been excepted from the pardon.
3. Williams (the magistrate) to King (A.S.I. 4172).

CHAPTER XVII.

The Sequel of the Mutiny.

The account of the mutiny has thus been brought down to the final restoration of peace and discipline. But it still lacks one or two essential details. In the first place, not all the ringleaders were arrested and brought to trial, for a considerable number of them succeeded in escaping from the Nore. As early as 11 June a large boat-load of seamen, evidently from the Nore, and travelling under a full press of sail, was chased by a revenue cutter, but escaped.[1] On the 15th, while the *Inflexible* was still at the Nore waiting for her pardon, three boat-loads of mutineers set out from her, and rowed to Feversham. There they seized a small vessel called the *Good Intent*, and nearly twenty of them went on board. They made their way successfully out to sea and landed at Calais. The *Good Intent* was sent back in charge of two boys, to whom the adventure might not be unpleasing.[2] Seeing that in all probability the mutiny originated on the *Inflexible*, and the men who escaped were likely to be those who had most reason to fear submission, we may conclude that some of those who were chiefly responsible for the mutiny succeeded in avoiding its penalties.

There were other reports which may have referred to the same incident. A Margate smack had word from a boat from Calais that eighteen or twenty men and two women had escaped from the Nore and had gone to Calais;[3] and the master of a neutral vessel gave information that a smack containing seventeen seamen and four

1. Intelligence in Home Office Records, George III (Domestic), 41.
2. Pro. T 9, 10 (Digest), 15 and 21 June.
3. Admiral Peyton to Nepean, 18 June, E 413 (Digest).

women had reached Calais.[1] Cunningham also heard that eighteen men from the *Inflexible* and some from the *Montague* escaped in a boat to Holland.[2]

It may well be that other mutineers reached France and Holland unobserved. Not all who tried to escape, however, were so fortunate as the men of the *Inflexible*. A skipper named William Everett was forced to admit two men and a woman to his smack, and he was ordered to take his uninvited guests to France. But when they had gone as far as the Downs, the smack was stopped by a lugger, and the two mutineers were arrested and imprisoned.[3] On 16 June a launch containing thirteen fugitive mutineers was captured near the Thames mouth by the *Success* revenue cutter. Eight of the seamen were sent on board Peyton's flagship in the Downs, and five were imprisoned in Ramsgate.[4]

One delegate, who was unable to escape, forestalled the law by committing suicide. He was Wallace, the president of the *Standard*, who had been one of the most active of the ringleaders. He shot himself on 13 June, as the *Standard* was going up the river to be surrendered.[5]

It is rather strange that the official leader of the mutiny was not among those who at least tried to make their escape. There is no obvious reason why he should not have been among the discreet men who sailed to the Continent. It was generally expected that he would make some attempt to ensure his own safety. A royal proclamation was issued, announcing a reward of £500

1. Letters from Customs Authorities, 19 June (Digest).

2. *Cunningham*, p. 82.

3. A.S.I. 4172, 15 June. Everett said that the men came from the *Inflexible*. But Peyton reported on the same day that two men, one from the *Proserpine* and one from the *Tysiphone* had been caught in the Downs and imprisoned (E 407). It may be supposed that these were the men who were trying to escape in Everett's smack. It is the more likely, since he said that the woman came from the *Proserpine*.

4. Customs, 16 June (Digest).

5. *Schomberg*, vol. iii, p. 30; Capts. D 44 (Digest). Wallace was one of the three men who had gone ashore with the "Final Determination of the Fleet" (*Cunningham*, p. 78).

for his arrest.[1] On 12 June a ship was sent to cruise off the Thames mouth with the object of preventing his escape by sea;[2] and there was a rumour, to which the Admiralty paid some attention, that Parker was actually on board a Danish vessel, preparing for flight;[3] and it was also reported that he intended to sail with other ringleaders in the *Pylades*.[4] But apparently he did not try to escape. If at one time he intended to put to sea in the *Swan*,[5] the plan was spoilt by the decision of the crew to submit, and it seems that when this hope of safety was removed he resigned himself to his fate. It can hardly have been that the crew of the *Sandwich* were ungenerous enough to hold Parker a captive with a view to reward.[6] Possibly he had grown desperate in the later days of the mutiny, and careless of his life. Or perhaps he preferred to put himself straightforwardly at the King's mercy—and he may have had some slight hope of eventual pardon.[7]

By whatever motive, or compound of motives, he may have been guided, Parker remained on the *Sandwich*

1. *Proclamation for the Apprehension of Richard Parker* (Brit. Mus., 1222, 1, 9, 29). Copies of the proclamation were distributed at Sheerness on 14 June, when they were no longer needed (C 374).

2. The *Virginie* (E 399, 12 June, Digest). Rotheran, of the *Hawke*, also set out from Yarmouth with the same object. He wrote that his crew were mutinous, but they do not seem to have been seriously disaffected. There is no further mention of disturbances at Yarmouth (Capts. R 55 Digest; C 373, 12 June). Three other ships, the *Révolutionnaire*, the *Melampus* and the *Ariadne*, were ordered to sail with the *Virginie* (Nepean to Bridport, 12 June: A.S.O. 1352, p. 142); but Peyton's letter does not make it clear whether they sailed or not.

3. Pro. T 38, 10 June (Digest). All Englishmen were ordered off the ship (the *Success*), but Parker was not among them.

4. Nepean to Bridport, 12 June, u.s. For the character of this ship, see above, p. 159, n. 3.

5. See above, p. 227.

6. Nevertheless, according to Atkinson, captain of the forecastle of the *Sandwich*, as soon as it was decided to surrender the ship, the delegates tried to hoist out a boat, but were prevented by other members of the crew (Atkinson's evidence, A.S.I. 3685).

7. When Parker addressed the crew of the *Sandwich* on 14 June, he asked them whether they were "willing to accept of his Majesty's pardon" (see evidence of Lieutenant Flatt at the court-martial, A.S.I. 5486). Parker's policy during the mutiny, and the arguments used in his defence at the court-martial seem to indicate that this was the chief reason for his surrender.

until the crew surrendered. If the *Sandwich* had not been the flagship and the meeting-place of the delegates the crew would almost certainly have been among the first that made their submission. Many members of the ship's company were entirely hostile to the mutiny, and it will be remembered that they were supposed to be on the point of returning to their duty when the Lords of the Admiralty were in Sheerness. The process of surrender began on 12 June, when the officers who had been imprisoned on board were set at liberty. But there was a reaction, and they were confined again on the next day. On the 14th they were released once more, and they witnessed Parker's last appearance as President of the fleet. He called the crew together, and asked them whether the ship was to remain in the power of the delegates, or whether the command should be restored to the officers. The same men who a month before had refused to listen to their captain, now cried out almost unanimously, "To the officers." Two of them still held back, but they only objected on the ground that the ships behind them would fire if the white flag were hoisted. The officers accordingly took command, and the white flag was run up without any disastrous result. The other crews, in fact, were all in the mood to surrender. Parker yielded up the keys; he himself led with three cheers, and he offered help with the capstan when the order was given to weigh anchor. As the ship was moving towards Sheerness, Parker was taken down to a cabin. He was confined there for the night, and on the next morning he was put in irons.[1] A company of the Norfolk militia

1. Evidence of (Third) Lieut. Flatt at the court-martial. (Fourth) Lieut. Mott had been sent ashore to bring a proclamation of pardon. Command was given to the officers on his return. It was stated by Lieut. Mott that Campbell, a coloured seaman, was the chief mover in the surrender of the ship. He was probably the same man who had been punished on 14 May (evidence of Snipe, surgeon of the *Sandwich*, who had been taken on deck to witness the punishment of a seaman named Campbell). At that time, however, he played a less creditable part, for according to Parker's statement at the court-martial, Campbell had been "beastly drunk," and Bray, master of the *Sandwich*, confirmed Parker's statement (A.S.I. 3685). He is mentioned as "Black Jack Campbell" in two other courts-martial.

took him on shore. He was removed to Maidstone jail, with other prisoners from the *Sandwich*, and remained there until the time of his trial. [1]

In the meantime the officers in Sheerness were occupied in the difficult but congenial work of making straight the confusion caused by the mutiny. The recollection of the second outbreak at Spithead may have caused them some anxiety, but any fears that they may have experienced on this account were not realized. Probably the great majority of the seamen who remained on the ships were as weary of the mutiny as the officers were themselves. Most of the men of a rebellious spirit were either in prison or on the further side of the Channel.

Not the least important part of the work to be done after the collapse of the mutiny was the collection of evidence against prisoners. Keith and Captain Knight had visited the ships as they made their submission, and had taken away such papers as had not been destroyed by the mutineers. Magistrates in Sheerness and the neighbouring towns were constantly engaged in examining witnesses. The commanding officers were preparing for the trials of Parker and of many other prisoners, and the other officers were ordering the affairs of their ships.

It was a foregone conclusion that Parker would be condemned. The order for his court-martial was issued on 19 June,[2] and together with the order Nepean sent a private letter to Admiral Pasley, who had been appointed the president of the court. In this letter he said: "You may prove almost anything you like against him, for he has been guilty of everything that's bad. Admiral Buckner will be a material evidence to state the proceedings which took place on his visit to the *Sandwich*, and which, indeed, of itself appears to be enough to dispose of a dozen scoundrels of Parker's description." [3] And after the trial Pasley wrote back to Nepean: "My

1. *Cunningham*, p. 80; *Schomberg*, vol. iii, p. 29.
2. A.S.I. 727, C 395.
3. *Ibid.*

dear Sir, The conviction of this villain Parker must have been so very dear to you at the Admiralty that the place and time of his execution might have been previously settled. It would have been on such an occasion perhaps more exemplary, had the court assumed the power lodged in their own breast by the articles of war, and executed him the hour of conviction, but their wish was to refer time and place to their Lordships, in whose power is that of His Majesty. We all wish it may be to order him to be hung in chains in some conspicuous place as an example." [1]

Thus neither the officers nor the authorities in town disguised their vindictiveness, and Parker had no reason to look for mercy from his rulers. Seeing that it had been made a capital offence even to hold communications with the mutineers, it was not to be expected that the leader of the mutiny would escape death when once he had fallen into the power of the law.

Parker's trial aroused a great amount of public interest, and several varying reports of the proceedings were issued in the form of pamphlets.[2] But in this account of the mutiny there is no need for a long description of the event. The court met on Thursday, 22 June, on board the *Neptune* in Long Reach. The trial was continued on the following day, and ended with the conviction and sentence of the prisoner on Monday, 26th. The Board of Admiralty did not support Pasley's petition—partly, it may be, as a matter of policy, because a display of undue ferocity might lead to a fresh rising in the fleet. Parker was hung at the yard-arm of the *Standard* on the morning of 30 June. There was no sign of disorder in the fleet during the execution or afterwards. Parker's own conduct in his last hour was " decent and sober." [3] If

1. C 444, 27 June.

2. *E.g., An Impartial and Authentic Account*; *Trial, Life and Anecdotes*; and *The Whole Trial and Defence*, all published in 1797.

3. Skeffington Lutwidge (Provost Marshal) to Nepean (A.S.I. 728, C 463, 30 June). No boat was allowed to leave the fleet during the day, and all officers remained on their ships. *Schomberg* (vol. iii, p. 35) gives a detailed account of the execution.

his whole life had been actuated by the spirit that he showed at its close his record might indeed have been less remarkable, but at least he would have left behind him a fairer fame.

Parker has received, both from his contemporaries and from more recent writers, a greater amount of consideration than he deserved. Nevertheless, it is due to him that some attempt should be made to estimate his position in history and the extent of his responsibility for the mutiny at the Nore. In his defence at the court-martial, Parker insisted that he had joined the mutiny after its beginning, "with a view of endeavouring to stop the fatal spirit" that was abroad in the fleet, and that the crew of the *Inflexible* were primarily responsible for the mutiny. All measures, he said, originated on that ship, and violent committee meetings were held there every day. The first statement cannot be accepted as true. A man who wishes to oppose a movement does not commonly put himself at its head. Moreover Parker's conduct throughout the mutiny showed that he wanted to be regarded as a zealous supporter of the seaman's cause. His violence of language and action on various occasions may have been due to a desire to find favour with the other ringleaders;[1] but it cannot be doubted that at the outset he threw himself into the mutinous movement. It was probably a rash ambition that prompted him to take the office of president. He was an impetuous man, not likely to count the cost of his enterprise, and he was evidently fond of pomp and display and impressed with the importance of his position.

Thus, up to a certain point, Parker was without question an active and determined mutineer: the other delegates would never have chosen as their leader a man

1. Cf. Joyce, of the *Royal George*, whose language, when he was on shore with six or eight other mutineers, was violent, although he was in the presence of his mother and a magistrate (Graham to Nepean, 11 May, A.S.I. 4172).

of whose opinion they had any doubt. But there is something to be said on the other side. Parker had reason to lay a considerable share of blame on the crew of the *Inflexible*. They had fired the first shot at the *San Fiorenzo*; they had inspired the men of the *Clyde* with terror; and they had given Lord Spencer occasion to write that "they were the most violent and desperate men in the fleet, that they had their guns loaded up to the muzzle, ready and apparently very desirous of making use of them." [1] It seems that throughout the mutiny these men and others of the same character were goading Parker on to sanction measures that he would not have ordered on his own responsibility. He was not strong enough to resist them: instead, he tried to make it appear that he was the author of such measures—the leader of the mutiny in fact as well as in name. In this connexion it is interesting to read the words of an unknown revolutionary, whose sayings were freely reported to the Admiralty. "It is of no use," this person observed, "to abuse Parker the delegate. I despise him, not admitting he was the man that inspired the sailors with courage enough to say that the merchants should go without turtle if the sailors were not employed by them." [2] Apparently Parker was at times used as a cat's paw by more cautious men, who threw on him the responsibility for measures designed by themselves. It is not unlikely that several of the real authors and the strongest upholders of the mutiny were among the score of men who sailed to France in the *Good Intent*.

Cunningham, who was in a position to speak with some authority, said that Parker had enough ability to make himself a leader among the seamen, but that he was not capable of turning the mutiny to his own advantage, nor

1. Spencer to Nepean (Sheerness), 29 May, A.S.M. 137.

2. A.S.I. 3974 (Intelligence), pp. 254, *sqq.*, 11 June. The allusion is of course to the resolutions of the committee of merchants, passed three days before.

of keeping it within bounds.[1] The evidence available at the present time points to the same conclusion.

It would be beside the purpose of this essay to dwell on the events that followed Parker's death. The exhuming of his body, and the burial in Whitechapel aroused great public interest at the time. But the display of interest had no historical importance. It was rather due to the deference shown by a certain class of people to notoriety of any kind. Nor is it necessary to follow in detail the process of retribution that occupied the officials at Sheerness during the summer of 1797. The courts-martial continued for two or three months.[2] According to the official lists, 354 mutineers were pardoned, fifty-two were condemned to death; and eight were sentenced to flogging or terms of imprisonment. Apparently, only twenty-four of the death sentences were carried out; but the exact figures cannot be known. In the lists bound up with the minutes of the Board there are pencilled notes showing that the punishment inflicted on certain of the seamen had not been ascertained.[3]

Probably the naval authorities soon lost interest in their work of purging the Nore fleet of malcontents. Discipline was thoroughly restored; there was no further murmuring in the fleet; and there was, in consequence, no need for a severe chastening of the surviving mutineers. The seamen who had received the King's pardon returned willingly to their normal duties; and it is noteworthy that six of the ships that had been concerned in the mutiny took part four months later in the battle of

1. *Cunningham*, p. 87.

2. In A.S.I. 5486 there are thirty-two volumes of reports of the courts-martial. The volumes contain, on the average, fifty or sixty quarto pages. The reports were transcribed from shorthand notes made by the firm of Gurney, the parliamentary reporters. Much of the evidence is tedious; but on the whole a more vivid and accurate impression of the state of the fleet during the mutiny and of the mental attitude of the seamen is conveyed by these reports than by any of the other documents that I have seen.

3. There are two copies of the list of mutineers at the end of A.S.M. 137. *Cunningham* (p. 104) gives the number of executions as 23.

Camperdown.[1] After the battle the mutineers who were still in prison asked that they might be set free. Their petition was supported by Duncan himself, and the prisoners were released.[2] In a declaration which they sent afterwards to the Admiralty they said that they would never take part in another rising, but would, if it were necessary, give their help in suppressing mutinous conduct.[3] They kept their word, and neither the Nore fleet nor any other part of the navy was ever again troubled with a rising that approached the Nore mutiny in seriousness and danger.

It is true that the discontent was not altogether allayed. The disorders at Plymouth, which seemed to be entirely settled before the end of May, were revived in the latter part of June. Early in July and again in September there were abortive mutinies in the Mediterranean fleet, which were suppressed by the prompt and courageous action of Jervis and some of his officers. In the autumn there were graver disturbances in the West Indies and at the Cape of Good Hope. And in the next four years several outbreaks occurred on individual ships, notably the mutiny on the *Téméraire* at Beerhaven in 1801. But these mutinies were like the milder recurrences that sometimes follow, at an interval, an epidemic of fever. Almost certainly every one of them was simply copied from the great mutinies in the home fleets. The risings at Plymouth were incited in the first instance, by letters

1. *Ann. Reg.*, App. to Chronicle, pp. 77, 78. The ships were *Director*, *Montague*, *Monmouth*, *Ardent*, *Belliqueux* and *Lancaster*. The *Rose* cutter, which had captured the delegates going from the Nore to Yarmouth, was one of the repeaters in Onslow's division at Camperdown.

2. The petition is in A.S.I. 5125. The letter of thanks written by the mutineers on the *Eagle* who had been set at liberty is dated 6 Nov.

3. *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. The prisoners from the *Eagle* were sent into Duncan's fleet (Minutes 122, Digest), but they were scattered, so that those who had been on the same ship in the mutiny could not come together again and plan fresh disorders. Duncan was warned that one man (Edward Brown) was still dangerous, and that he had only volunteered in order to stir up mutiny. The better sort of prisoners were released in August; the rest in November (see Nepean to Lutwidge, 23 August, A.S.O. 1352).

from Spithead; the *Grampus*, which had been through the Nore mutiny, spread the disaffection in the West Indies; Admiral Pringle believed that the disorders at the Cape were due to the example of the Channel fleet, and there is strong evidence to support his opinion. In the Mediterranean fleet there were many seamen who had taken part in the great mutinies: a month before the earlier outbreak the first news had arrived from Spithead, and in the meantime several ships from the home fleets, including the *London* and the *Marlborough*, had joined Jervis's squadron. In almost every case the grievances were the bad quality of the food, and ill-treatment by the officers. We may assume, therefore, that these later mutinies were only due to the knowledge that the seamen of one fleet had been able to improve their condition, and the hope that similar benefits—particularly the removal of unpopular officers—might be secured in other fleets, by the method which had been adopted at Spithead. The success of the Channel fleet seemed to have disclosed a rapid way of reform, and when once the example was set, there were men who were anxious to apply the method. The wide extent of the troubles shows that the grievances were felt throughout the navy, but the very great decline in the mutinous movement after its first outburst in 1797 shows that most of the grievances had been removed.

The mutinies of 1797, in fact, had begun with a sudden stroke a movement which continued steadily throughout the nineteenth century. They drew public attention to the bad conditions of life in the navy, and they produced at once a number of reforms. These reforms included, besides the increase of wages and provisions sanctioned by the Act of 9 May: an allowance of full pay for any wounded men, or in case of incurable wounds, a pension, or admission to Greenwich Hospital; a reduced charge for the postage of letters; liberty to go ashore when the ships were in port; the supply of fresh flour and vegetables, and a general improvement in the dietary and

in the quality of the provisions; better treatment and accommodation for sick men; and arrangements for remitting regularly a portion of the wages to the seamen's relatives.[1] The mutinies were a first and, in the circumstances, a necessary step in the direction of reform. The naval authorities had not appreciated the grievances of the seamen; so that without some such impulse, the improvements might have been indefinitely delayed. But when once the impulse had been given, the reforms were carried on without further effort on the part of the seamen, by a succession of able and sympathetic rulers—notably by Sir Cooper Key—and gradually the present equitable and efficient system was evolved.[2]

The account of the mutinies has been brought down to the permanent restoration of peace between the seamen and the Admiralty. It remains to discuss in this chapter the character of the Nore mutiny, and the reasons for its failure, and in the two following books to attempt an examination of the causes of the mutinies and their relation to general history.

In the first place it is most important to notice that all the concessions were secured by the first pacific rising at Spithead, and that the violence of the later mutinies was not only wasted, but was even injurious to the cause of the seamen. Any good that may have been done by the Nore mutiny in emphasizing the grievances that were still unredressed was in all probability more than counterbalanced by the ill-feeling aroused in the mind of the public by the excesses of the ringleaders. The difference in character of the two mutinies is obvious; but is not easily explained. It may be that the seamen of the Nore were as a whole inferior in character to those of the Channel fleet. Pasley thought that the Nore mutiny was largely due to men who had been recruited from the

1. I have taken this list of reforms from *Robinson* (pp. 391, 392).
2. Cf. *Hannay*, vol. ii, p. 384: "They shocked their rulers into beginning to improve the conditions of their service." For details of the later reforms, see Admiral Colomb's *Life of Sir Cooper Key*.

prisons.[1] Perhaps men of this class were particularly strong in the Nore fleet, but it must be allowed that at Spithead there were many Irishmen who had come from prison.[2]

Moreover, it is noticeable that the ships' companies at the Nore varied greatly in disposition. On the *Inflexible*, the *Montague* and the *Monmouth*, there was a large proportion of ardent mutineers. The crews of the *Clyde*, the *San Fiorenzo*, the *Espion*, the *Niger*, the *Hound*, and some other ships were almost entirely loyal. And in other vessels the two factions were nearly equal in strength. The reasons for these variations are probably: in the first place, the accidental concourse of discontented men on the same ship; secondly, the character of the men who became ringleaders on the various ships; thirdly, the character of the officers, and the extent to which they had ruled the crews with firmness and equity; and fourthly, the proximity of the ships to the shore. In this connexion it may be observed that there were no crews at the Nore more consistently loyal than those of the *Espion* and *Niger*. These ships were both well-disciplined, and were also stationed in the harbour, so that their crews were able to understand the feelings of people on shore, and were to some extent under the authority of the officers in Sheerness. And the crew of the *Royal William*, Sir Peter Parker's flagship in Portsmouth harbour, remained loyal throughout the Spithead mutinies.

Probably the second of the reasons given above is the most important. For it certainly appears that the greater violence of the Nore fleet as a whole was due to the action of the ringleaders. Almost from the beginning of the mutiny they were aggressive and boastful. They urged their followers to extremities instead of keeping them in check. Indeed they adopted a system of terror in order

1. A.S.I. 728, C 501, 10 July.
2. *E.g.*, Joyce had been imprisoned for sedition.

to maintain the force of the mutiny. They did not understand the wisdom of accepting a small advantage. They demanded the most unlikely concessions from the government, and when the demands were refused, they expressed their anger in useless violence. It would have been better for them in every way if they had made their peace when they first heard of the satisfactory settlement at Spithead.

The delegates of the Channel fleet, on the other hand, showed a statesmanlike reserve. They were contented with the terms offered them, and they were rewarded with a free pardon. Unfortunately the details of their methods are lost, probably beyond recovery; but from the struggle on the *London*, the plot that was being prepared on the *Mars*, and the later conspiracy on the *Pompée* it may be judged that the work of restraining their crews was by no means easy. If the ringleaders at Spithead had been as reckless as those at the Nore, their mutiny would almost certainly have been as violent and dangerous as the other.[1]

It is doubtful, however, whether the delegates at the Nore would have been more successful even if they had been more moderate. They might have saved their own lives, and they would not have dragged the naval service into discredit; but it is not likely that they would have won any fresh concessions. The reason has been given before;[2] it was the consistent policy of the government and of the Admiralty to refuse any terms except unconditional surrender. Not all the demands of the Nore mutineers were unreasonable in themselves,[3] and some people were in favour of appointing a committee to consider the grievances of the seamen.[4] But the govern-

1. Or even more dangerous, because the Channel fleet could easily have put to sea, and deserted to the French or Irish.

2. See above, p. 144.

3. *E.g.*, the demand for a fairer distribution of prize-money.

4. Sheridan had such a scheme in mind, but before he could make it public the Lords of the Admiralty went to Sheerness, and their visit made any attempt towards conciliation impracticable. See Sheridan's speech in the House of Commons, 1 June (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 801–802).

ment were undoubtedly well-advised in refusing to listen to any fresh demands. If they had yielded, they would have acknowledged their concessions to the Spithead mutineers as a precedent, and would in effect have recognized mutiny as a regular means of naval reform. Since there could be no conciliation, the only chance of success for the seamen was in the fall of the government. The mutiny resolved itself, in fact, into a life-and-death struggle between the government and the Nore fleet.

The conditions of the struggle were very much in favour of the government. It is true that until 29 May no serious effort was made to counteract the mutiny; but when once the measures of opposition were carried into effect, the ultimate success of the government became practically certain. It was enough to defeat the seamen in time that they were deprived of all means of replenishing their supply of food. Their complete isolation from the shore made it impossible for their friends on land—who were few—to bring them fresh supplies, and the removal of the lights and buoys prevented them from going out in search of provisions. In the same way their escape by sea was made practically impossible. It may be noticed in this connexion how greatly the mutineers were handicapped by the position of their ships. If they had been lying in the open sea, or in a place from which there was easy access to the sea, nothing but a superior fleet could have prevented their escape; but as the fleet was in the river mouth, with only a narrow channel between the sandbanks, the naval authorities were able to entrap them. The same circumstance that gave the mutineers command of the river tended also to their defeat.

Finally, the government had most useful allies in the fleet itself. Undoubtedly the end of the mutiny came much sooner by reason of the dissensions among the seamen. There were some men in the fleet who had always been opposed to the mutiny. Others turned

against it when the Lords of the Admiralty went away without coming to terms. Still more supported the mutiny as long as it prospered, but lost heart when their position became desperate. They discovered that to persist in the revolt was to run the risk of death or exile, and that there was an amnesty awaiting those who should submit. Naturally they preferred to make their peace, and they even fought for their surrender.

The Nore mutiny failed in every respect; and the chief reasons for its failure were want of food and lack of unanimity. But the second cause was bound up with several others. The acts of Parliament, the royal proclamations, the unbending determination of the Admiralty, the hostility of the public—these all worked upon the minds of the seamen, and contributed to the defeat of the mutiny.[1]

1. *Cunningham* (p. 74), gives as the reasons for the failure of the mutiny: the vicious conduct of the delegates; the unwillingness of the crews to put to sea without knowing their destination; and the lack of provisions.

BOOK V.

The Grievances of the Seamen

CHAPTER XVIII.

Wages and Provisions.

In the remaining chapters an attempt will be made to discover the cause of the mutinies. We should notice in the first place that if the seamen had not suffered any undue hardships—if they had been well and regularly paid, well fed, and wisely disciplined—there would never have been a mutiny in the navy. But the mutinies were not due to any fresh imposition: it will be shown in this chapter that at the beginning of 1797 the wages of the seamen were as high, the discipline was as fair, and the provisions were as good as they had been at any time in the eighteenth century. The grievance seems rather to have been that reforms in the navy had not kept pace with reforms on land. The seamen were largely cut off—far more than they are to-day—from communication with people on shore. They were often away from home for many years together; and even when they were in port they were not allowed to land until the ships had been paid off. As long, therefore, as the fleet was quiet and no complaints were heard, the nation, the Parliament, and even the Lords of the Admiralty remained too ignorant of the conditions of life in the navy, and for lack of knowledge they paid little heed to the hard estate of the seamen.

This fact to some extent accounts for the mutinies; but the explanation is not wholly satisfactory. If this were the only cause of the outbreak, it must be supposed that the discontent of the seamen gradually increased with the growing disparity between the conditions of life on sea and on land; that their patience was strained to the

breaking-point; and that they rebelled at length because their lives had been made unendurable. But there is no indication of such a gradual growth of disaffection.[1] It seems rather that the spirit of mutiny spread rapidly through the fleet: apparently a large proportion of the seamen neither realized the full extent of their hardships nor saw any possibility of improvement until both the grievance and the means of redress were pointed out to them by reformers. Hence some further reason must be found for the rather sudden appearance of discontent; and there is strong evidence to support the view that the underlying cause of the mutinies was political.

But before this more obscure aspect of the rising is considered, there is something more to be said of the ostensible cause. In the foregoing argument two assumptions have been made: firstly, that the conditions of life in the navy were unnecessarily bad; secondly, that the treatment of the seamen in 1797 was no worse than the treatment of many generations of seamen before them. The evidence for these statements must be given before the discussion can be carried further. In the present book, therefore, the grievances of which the seamen made complaint will be examined with a view of discovering to what extent the mutinies were due to ill-treatment. The actual complaints of the mutineers will be reviewed in the first place, and afterwards the conditions of naval life in 1797 will be compared with the conditions in earlier times.

The first grievance to be considered is the inadequacy of the seamen's wages. It was the sole basis of the earliest petitions, and an increase of wages was always the most prominent demand of the Spithead mutineers. It was said in the petitions to the Admiralty that the rate of wages had not altered since the time of Charles II,

1. The mutinies on single ships that occurred during the American War and the early years of the Revolutionary War seem to have been spontaneous outbreaks against the officers. They cannot be referred to any definite principle or wide conspiracy. For an account of these mutinies see *Clowes*, vol. iv, pp. 167, 168.

whereas the cost of living had risen by one-third; and the statement may be taken as approximately true.[1] During the Protectorate the seamen had been paid 19s. 0d. a (lunar) month, and ever since that time the rate of wages for ordinary seamen had been 19s. 0d., and the rate for able seamen 22s. 6d. The pay may have been adequate at first; but there is no doubt that the purchasing power of money fell considerably during the eighteenth century. Moreover the system of payment was very irregular. It was a recognized custom that the crews should not be paid until their wages were overdue by six months. But if a ship was long in commission the wages were apt to fall some years behindhand. The seamen were not allowed to go ashore until their ship was paid off, and if in the meantime any of them were in need of money their only recourse was to the slopsellers who came on board when the ship was in port. The slopsellers made advances on security of the wages, as a bank discounts bills of exchange; only the rate of discount was naturally very high, since the slopsellers had a monopoly of the money-lending trade with the seamen. Everyone in the navy had also to contribute a small amount to the funds of Greenwich Hospital. Seeing that the gross nominal wages of the ordinary seamen were only £23 a year, and that from this amount various deductions had to be made, it is evident that they were justified in saying that some of them lived in "indigence and extreme penury,"[2] and some were "but barely able to support themselves."[3]

1. See petition to the Commons (*Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, p. 239), and petition to the Admiralty from the *Defence* (enclosed with Sir Peter Parker's letter, A 354, A.S.I. 1022). According to the petitions the wages were fixed *by statute* in the reign of Charles II. But neither in the acts of his reign relating to the navy, nor in the Calendars of State Papers, nor yet in the General Regulations of 1770, have I been able to find any mention of the subject. The rate may have been determined by Orders in Council, or, as in 1797, simply by the granting of supplies in Parliament, in accordance with estimates prepared by the Admiralty.

2. Petition from the *London* to Charles James Fox (with Bridport's letter, J 198, A.S.I. 107).

3. Petition from the *Defence* to the Admiralty, u.s.

Moreover, many of the sailors had to maintain wives and families to the best of their ability, and others who were unmarried must have had relatives who were more or less dependent upon them. It was inevitable that those who had no other income than the small and long-deferred wages of the ordinary seaman should be driven to seek help from the parish. A song-writer in the Nore fleet described their fate in these lines:

> Thus from each soft endearment torn,
> Behold the seaman languish,
> His wife and children left forlorn,
> The prey of bitter anguish.
> Bereft of those arms whose vigorous strength,
> Their shield, from want defended,
> They droop, and all their woes at length
> Are in a workhouse ended.[1]

It is a crude statement, but it recalls a calamity that was probably by no means uncommon in the families of the seamen.

The inadequacy of the wages was the more galling because the salaries of lieutenants had been raised only a few months before,[2] and two years before the beginning of the mutinies there had been a general increase in the pay of the soldiers.[3] Even the able seamen had their grievance. It was the policy of the Admiralty, while the wages of the seamen were stinted, to lavish bounty-money on volunteers, in the hope of inducing men by peaceable means to join the navy. The amount of the bounties varied considerably; but it was sometimes possible for a quota-man, who might be quite ignorant of naval affairs,

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 2 (A.S.I. 727, C 370a).

2. *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 413. It should be noticed that the reason for the reform was the same as that urged by the seamen—the general increase in prices since the time at which the rate of payment had been established.

3. Petition of the *Defence* to the Admiralty, u.s. There was also a striking contrast in the scale of pensions. Private soldiers had a pension of £13 a year, but common seamen had only £7.

to receive at his enlistment as much as an able seaman could earn in three years.[1]

It was a poor economy on the part of the government to restrict the wages of the seamen and at the same time to give parochial relief to their wives and families, and to offer enormous bounties to volunteers. A reasonable increase in wages would have done away with a large part of the poor-relief, and would have reduced both the number and the size of the bounties. The increase came under compulsion after the mutinies, but it would have come much more gracefully and with better effect as a free gift from the nation. These considerations, however, were clear to very few people at the beginning of 1797.[2]

The smallness of the wages was a great grievance, but it was not perhaps the most important. The lack of good food may have been felt more generally, strongly and continually. While the sailor was at sea he had no use for money; but the faults of his dietary were always present to his mind. And whereas the want of money bore most heavily on the men who had families, the desire for fresh and abundant food was universal. The quality of the provisions must have varied greatly on different ships and at different times and places; but there can be no doubt that in general the seamen had good cause to complain of their treatment in respect of victuals. It must be admitted that the work of the Victualling Board was not easy. Even at the present time care and forethought are needed for the supply of a wholesome dietary for crews that are long at sea. In the eighteenth century, when little was known of the means of preserving

1. *Cunningham*, p. 101. At this rate the bounty would be at least £40: the wages of an able seaman amounted to £43 17s. 6d. in three years. Richard Parker received £30 when he enlisted as a quota-man. The bounties probably varied according to the balance of demand and supply.

2. It is to the credit of some of the Whigs that they had tried, before the mutinies, to bring about an improvement in the conditions of naval service; *e.g.*, Sheridan had brought forward a bill with this object in 1786 (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 642).

meat and other provisions in a state of freshness, the difficulty was much greater. Salted meat was necessarily one of the chief articles of diet. Apart from fresh vegetables, which could only be used during the first few days of a voyage, there was practically nothing to counteract the evil effects of the meat, and the health of the seamen suffered in consequence.[1] But even when allowance is made for this difficulty the fact remains that the victualling of the navy was not managed with proper care and efficiency. Since it was difficult to preserve the food in good condition, it was all the more necessary that the provisions should be sound and pure at the beginning of a voyage, and that the utmost care should be taken to store them in a clean and wholesome manner. But the quality of the provisions was notoriously bad,[2] and no trouble was taken to find suitable storage. The water was put into wooden casks which were often unclean, and tainted with the evidence of previous use. Naturally, it became foul and undrinkable in a short time. The beer suffered in the same way; and it was unfortunate that rum, which was dealt out liberally to the crews, was the one drink that remained unspoiled, the one source of comfort allowed to the seamen. The flour was not properly stored, and it soon became infested with meal-worms.[3] The officers were apt to reserve the best portions of the food for their own mess, so that the common

1. The virtues of lime-juice as an antidote to scurvy had only recently been discovered. Lime-juice was first used in the navy in 1795 (*Robinson*, p. 140).

2. See petition to the Admiralty, 18 April (*Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 240) : " That our provisions be raised to the weight of sixteen ounces to the pound, and of a better quality." See also letter to the Admiralty, 19 April (*ibid.*, p. 243) : "As to our provisions : That they be augmented to sixteen ounces to the pound of bread and meat; cheese, butter, and liquor in proportion, of a better quality, etc."

3. I borrow this statement from Mr. Masefield's book, *Sea Life in Nelson's Time* (pp. 143–144). Mr. Masefield does not quote the authority for the statement, but this description of the bread is so much in keeping with other facts relating to the dietary that I have no doubt of its truth. It is borne out by the allusion to "maggoty bread" in the pamphlet quoted below (p. 292).

seamen had to subsist on the worst parts of a bad dietary. [1]

Moreover the policy of providing only fourteen ounces for a nominal pound of victuals was unhappy in its effect. Probably the amount of nourishment actually supplied was enough to maintain the strength of the seamen; but they had an impression that they were being meanly and unjustly treated, that the Victualling Board, to whom money was granted for a full pound and a full gallon, were acting unfairly in supplying only fourteen ounces of food and seven pints of liquor. In their negotiations with the Admiralty the seamen were very insistent that they should have the full measure to which they considered themselves to be entitled. Indeed, the whole question of provisions was very prominent in the Spithead mutiny. Two of the six demands of the seamen related to the supply of food. And when the crew of the *Glory* gave three cheers "for an Act of Parliament and an honest three pounds of pork" they were probably giving voice to the desire that was uppermost in the minds of nearly all the mutineers.[2]

1. In the orders of 1 May, the officers were instructed not to reserve choice pieces of fresh beef or salt meat for their own use, nor to select the best wines and spirits (*Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 250).
2. Captain Brine to Bridport, 7 May (A.S.I. 107).

CHAPTER XIX.

Discipline.

A THIRD serious grievance was the harsh conduct of some of the officers. It was not mentioned in the demands of the Spithead mutineers because the trouble was almost entirely in administration, and the remedy was not to be found in Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council.[1] But although the complaint did not appear in the petitions it was very strongly urged by the seamen, in their dealings with the Admiralty, with Bridport and with Howe; and this grievance fills a larger space than any other in the official documents relating to the Spithead mutiny. The extent of the grievance varied greatly on the different ships. In some cases the discipline was so mild that laziness and other faults were at a premium; the slack men went unpunished, and the burden of the ship's duty fell on the steady men who were willing to do the work.[2] On some ships—and these were the least troubled by mutiny—the officers were strict enough to keep the respect, and generous enough to win the affection of their crews. But there is no doubt that many officers, in every

1. The Nore mutineers were unwise enough to demand that the Articles of War should be amended. (No. 8 of the first demands: see *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 245; and above, p. 141 note). The punishments prescribed in some of the Articles were certainly very severe, but the government were not prepared to make the reforms at the instance of the seamen. In the last paper of demands, conveyed by Captain Knight on 10 June, it was proposed that the officers proscribed by the crews should be removed (*Daniel Price's Note-Book*, no. 7, A.S.M. 137). The mutineers at Spithead acted much more wisely in making the removal of officers a matter of private negotiation.

2. See *Cunningham*, p. 112. It is noticeable that the mutiny was particularly violent on some of the worst-disciplined ships (*e.g.*, *Queen Charlotte* at Spithead, *Monmouth* and *Montague* at the Nore), because the men had not learnt, or had lost, the habit of obedience.

fleet, were unnecessarily cruel and made unfair use of their authority. The life of the seamen in the eighteenth century was always rough and comfortless, but under such officers as these it must have been almost unendurable.[1]

The number of officers who were turned ashore at Portsmouth, at Sheerness and at Yarmouth, and the number of different ships from which they came, are a sufficient proof that the severity of the discipline was generally felt throughout the various fleets.[2] But more detailed evidence is to be found in the complaints sent by the crews at Spithead to Bridport and Howe. Although there were offending officers on nearly all the ships at Spithead, it appears that the grievance was most pronounced on the *Marlborough* and the *Nymphe*. The crew of the *Queen Charlotte* told Bridport that these two ships were "in a wretched condition," [3] and their state was so unsatisfactory that they were left behind under the care of Colpoys when the rest of the fleet went to St. Helens. During the whole of the two mutinies at Spithead their grievances were continually urged upon the attention of the authorities,[4] and the crews were not satisfied until Lord Howe agreed to the dismissal of both captains, of four other officers from the *Marlborough* and

1. Among the papers of the *Queen Charlotte* there is a note in answer to a hostile article in the *Sun*: "Mr. Editor. If you know what it is to have tasted any of the discipline you seem to prize so much,—if you had, I believe you would sing another song."

2. No definite charges against the officers of the Nore and North Sea fleets are to be found, because the Admiralty would not receive or consider any complaints. For the same reason there are no statistics of the number of officers turned ashore at Sheerness and Yarmouth. But from the numerous scattered references it may be judged that a considerable number were dismissed for a time or allowed to go on shore; and the rest were, of course, held as hostages.

3. See above, p. 55.

4. The case of the *Marlborough* was first considered on 15 April when Gardner and the two captains visited the ship (A.S.I. 1022, A 349). The complaints were again mentioned by Bridport on 25 April (A.S.I. 107, J 224); probably the crew had sent in a fresh list of complaints in answer to Bridport's circular. The grievances of the *Nymphe* were investigated on 19 April by Colpoys and two captains (A.S.I. 107, J 225, 228) They were repeated in the papers of the *Queen Charlotte*. See also Howe's report, A.S.I. 4172.

of two others from the *Nymphe*.[1] It is noticeable that in both cases exception was taken to the captains and lieutenants, and there can be no doubt that these officers were chiefly to blame. The character of the discipline on any ship was largely determined by the captain. If he were too mild, it would be impossible for the other officers to exercise a proper authority over the men. If he were just, he would not allow either slackness or needless severity. But the captains of the *Nymphe* and the *Marlborough*—and probably several others of a similar disposition—set an example of cruelty, and would be inclined to condone, or even to encourage, harsh conduct on the part of their subordinates.

On the *Nymphe* the chief complaints were directed against the lieutenants. No definite accusation was brought against Captain Cook; but the fact of his dismissal shows that his conduct had not been considered satisfactory. The most notorious offender was Irwin, the first lieutenant. The punishment of a seaman, by his order, for " silent contempt " has passed into history as an example of the brutality that largely justified the mutineers in revolting. George Verry, a seaman of the *Nymphe*, who must have been a man of remarkable endurance, was seen to smile at the end of a flogging. Irwin, noticing the smile, concluded that the flogging had not taken proper effect. Verry was tied up again, and was punished with thirty-six more lashes. Irwin also belaboured him about the head with a speaking-trumpet.[2] Apparently speaking-trumpets were not seldom used as instruments of correction. The captain of the *Marlborough* used his trumpet with such violence that the mouthpiece was broken. It was replaced by something more substantial, made from a double sheet of tin, with a solid iron ring round the end.[3] The lieutenants of the *Nymphe* made a practice of beating the men them-

1. *Ibid.*
2. Report of Colpoys, Vashon and Jones, 19 April (A.S.I. 107, J 228).
3. Howe's report, u.s.

selves when the boatswain's mates did not do the work heartily enough. And at times they ordered floggings for the most trifling offences. On one occasion two men were beaten for slackness. One of them had been sent up the rigging by a lieutenant. His rate of climbing did not satisfy the officer, and another man was sent up to bring him down again. The second seaman was also too slow in carrying out the order, and each of them was punished with twelve lashes. For a similar offence another seaman was beaten about the head and kicked, with such severity that the captain of the foretop advised him to go on the sick list. But the seaman refused, through fear of the officers. When the *Nymphe* was in action near Brest, several of the seamen were beaten at their quarters.[1] Such treatment could hardly inspire them with zeal for the service.

In the case of the *Marlborough* it was more evident that the abuses were largely the work of the captain. In the paper of complaints sent to Howe, the lieutenants, master's mates and boatswain's mates were only accused of following the example of Captain Nicholls. This officer was a morose and savage man, and it is possible that his mind was not altogether sound.[2] He was in the habit of " coming out from his cabin in the morning with a countenance similar to a thundery cloud," and in the too vigorous discharge of his duty he made free use, not only of his formidable speaking-trumpet, but also of his fists and his telescope.[3] When the grievances of the *Marlborough* were first investigated, at the beginning of the mutiny, Nicholls defended his conduct, and Gardner, who was a biassed judge, decided that the complaints were without foundation.[4] But Howe afterwards thought

1. Report of Colpoys, etc., u.s.

2. Soon after the mutinies he committed suicide in the waiting-room at the Admiralty Office (see *Brenton*, vol. i, p. 456). His general conduct was not unlike that of Captain Piggott, of the *Hermione*, whose cruelty was probably due to madness.

3. Howe's report, u.s.

4. Report of Gardner, Vashon and Dommett, 15 April (A.S.I. 1022, A 349).

it desirable that Nicholls should be dismissed, and his opinion was upheld by the Admiralty.[1]

The cases of the *Marlborough* and the *Nymphe* were possibly the worst, but the crews of several other ships suffered from the cruelty of individual officers. Complaints were most commonly made against the lieutenants. They had almost absolute power over the men; most of them were comparatively young; and if there was anything of the tyrant in their character they were apt to abuse the authority with which they had been early entrusted. In the same way Richard Parker was led to excesses because of his sudden rise to eminence and power. A large proportion of the officers sent ashore from the squadrons at Spithead were lieutenants. Beside the grievances brought against the lieutenants of the *Marlborough* and the *Nymphe*, serious accusations were made against Lieutenant Compton, of the *Minotaur*. It was said that he continually threatened and abused the seamen, and often punished them for very slight offences, causing the boatswain's mates to "start" [2] them when he was not disposed to carry out the punishment himself. His conduct was so brutal that the lives of many of the crew under his command were made utterly miserable.[3] The men of the *Amphitrite* brought similar charges against their first lieutenant; and it is noticeable that his cruelty asserted itself in spite of the character and policy of the captain.

> "Our first Lieutenant," the seamen said, "he is a most Cruel and Barberous man, Beating some at times untill they are not able to stand, and not allowing them the satisfaction to cry out. If your honr. be pleased to look Round you may find many ships that Want men and as wee want another ship by grantg. one Wee will Remain In duty Bound to Remain
>
> Your Ever lasting Servants and petitioners,
>
> Ship's Company of the *Amphitrite*."[4]

1. List of officers turned ashore (Howe to Bridport, 14 May, A.S.I. 4172; Howe to Nepean, 14 May, A.S.I. 579)
2. Complaints of the *Minotaur* (enclosed with Bridport's letter, 23 April, A.S.I. 107, J 224). To "start" is to hit with a knotted rope.
3. *Ibid.* Many men had deserted because of his cruelty.
4. A.S.I. 1022, A 463.

Many officers of lower rank—chiefly midshipmen, masters' mates and boatswains—were dismissed from their ships. Details of the cases of two boatswains have been preserved. The boatswain of the *Jason* frigate had been sent ashore (he was the only officer dismissed from this ship), and Sir Peter Parker proposed to transfer him to the *Cambrian*. But his reputation was so evil that the crew of the *Cambrian* broke into fresh mutiny when they heard of his coming.[1] The other case is that of the boatswain of the *Hind*. This ship was at Spithead during the mutinies, but two months before the outbreak it had been stationed at the Nore. At that time ten members of the crew complained to Buckner that they had suffered undue hardship at the hands of the boatswain;[2] and when, at the outbreak of the second Spithead mutiny, delegates from St. Helens came on board and asked whether the crew had an objection to any of the officers, the aggrieved seamen avenged themselves by sending the boatswain ashore with less than an hour's notice.[3]

All these examples of ill-treatment are taken from the records of the Channel fleet. There is no such direct evidence in regard to the Nore fleet, but there are indications that such officers as Captain Nicholls, Lieutenant Compton, and the boatswain of the *Jason* had their counterpart at the Nore and at Yarmouth. The mutineers at the Nore, who were in all respects more headstrong than the seamen at Spithead, included in their list of demands clauses providing that all unpopular officers should be permanently removed, that the Articles of War should be made less stringent[4] and that offenders should be tried by a properly constituted jury, so that

1. Legge to Parker, 6 May (A.S.I. 1022, A 420).
2. A.S.I. 727, C 107, 6 February.
3. Bazely to Parker, A.S.I. 1022, A 426. New officers were appointed for the *Hind* on 16 May (A 454). It may be supposed, therefore, that the boatswain was permanently dismissed.
4. Clauses 4 and 8 of the original demands (see *Ann. Reg.*, 1797, State Papers, p. 245).

they might have some protection from the tyranny of the officers.[1] Although these demands were impolitic, they served to show that the grievance of harsh discipline was not confined to the Channel fleet. Further evidence is supplied by the author of the song, "All hail, brother Seamen," in the couplet:

> Kind Providence long looked with pity at last
> For to see honest Jack so shamefully thrashed;

and in his description of the "crewel intentions" of the officers "to scourge when they please."[2] And some credit may be given to the statement of the revolutionary, whose sayings were reported to the Admiralty, that seamen were punished for singing songs that seemed to an officer likely to dishearten the crew;—although it may be supposed that it was rather in the quality of a patrician than in the capacity of a lictor that the "prig of an officer" incurred the censure of this advanced democrat.[3]

In addition to their general dislike of despotic officers, the seamen had conceived a special objection to the surgeons. The force of the objection can easily be understood when it is remembered that sickness was very common in the navy, because of the unhealthy conditions of life, and that in times of sickness men are peculiarly sensible of neglect or ill-treatment. The seamen at Spithead felt this grievance so keenly that they made it the subject of a special article of their demands. It appears that several of the surgeons in the Channel fleet, and probably in other fleets as well, were guilty of neglecting or ill-treating the sick men, and of embezzling or diverting from their proper use the provisions and

1. Clause 8 in the Address to the Nation (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 20, A.S.I. 727, C 370a).

2. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 29.

3. A.S.I. 3974 (Intelligence), 11 June. These reports are quoted below, Appendix A, p. 385.

drugs intended for the invalids.[1] Some details have been preserved of the charges against two surgeons in Bridport's squadron. The crew of the *Minotaur* complained to Bridport that their surgeon had failed in respect of inattention, cruelty and drunkenness.[2] This accusation, for all its brevity, reveals an unsatisfactory state of affairs. In the report from the *Marlborough* more particulars were given. The surgeon must have been a faithful supporter of the captain. He was charged with the usual fault of withholding the provisions supplied for the use of sick men, and several instances of his cruelty were mentioned in the paper of complaints sent to Howe. He allowed one man, who was really ill, to be flogged; and when the same man was " a living skeleton " he reported him to the captain for punishment. A sailmaker who went to the surgeon for treatment was told that he " was not sick but skulking." The captain, anxious to uphold the authority of his colleague, sent the sailmaker to the maintop. Three days later the sick man developed a swelling on his head, but the surgeon insisted that the swelling was due to an excess of burgoo[3] and molasses. The sailmaker died on the following day.[4] Only one instance of the neglect of sick men is known to have occurred in the Nore fleet. This case attracted public attention because the officer who was concerned in it was tarred and feathered by the seamen; and the penalty was largely justified by the fact that he had been drinking heavily for several weeks and was quite incapable of discharging his duty. Apart from this act of retribution the seamen at the Nore had no means of advertising the faults of individual surgeons. In all

1. See Art. 3 of the general petition to the Admiralty, 18 April (*Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 241). In the orders of 1 May captains and commanders were instructed to take particular care that the surgeons should not embezzle their supplies (*ibid.*, p. 250).

2. A.S.I. 107, J 224, 23 April.

3. An infusion of oatmeal supplied to the seamen at breakfast. In 1825 it was replaced by cocoa (*Robinson*, p. 140).

4. Howe's report, A.S.I. 4172.

probability some of the surgeons were in the habit of neglecting the sick and misappropriating the provisions.[1] But, on the other hand, by no means all of them were guilty of such offences. The surgeon of the *Sandwich*, for example, was allowed to remain on board through the greater part of the mutiny, and it was by his own desire that he was taken ashore.[2] And, in the Channel fleet, the surgeon of the *London* was extremely popular. It will be remembered that the safety of Colpoys and Griffiths was chiefly due to his influence with the crew.

The examples of misconduct on the part of the officers have been quoted here as they were given by the seamen in their complaints to the Admiralty. But a few considerations must be set against the unqualified acceptance of these reports. In the first place allowance must be made for exaggeration. It was to the advantage of the seamen to devise the strongest possible case against their officers; and it is quite likely that if a case of ill-treatment had occurred a long time before the mutinies, the account of such an event might be altered and expanded in repetition. We should receive complaints against surgeons with particular caution, because the seamen might readily mistake for needless severity a course of treatment which was really necessary for their cure.

Further, some of the charges brought against the officers were trivial and foolish. It is evident that on some ships the idea of bringing an indictment against the officers had not occurred to the seamen until it was suggested by Bridport's circular or by the example of the *Marlborough* and the *Nymphe*, and that the mutineers had to rack their memories in order to produce a presentable list of grievances. The captain of the *Jason* said that his crew had shown no discontent with their

1. The surgeons of the *Pearl*, the *Margarita*, and the *Terrible* were sent on shore at Portsmouth (see Parker's letters, A 426, 8 May, and A 436, 11 May, A.S.I. 1023); and it may be supposed that several others were dismissed from their ships.

2. Evidence of Snipe at Parker's trial (A.S.I. 5486).

officers until the outbreak of the second mutiny.[1] The seamen of the *Marlborough* had good reason to chafe at their treatment; but the marines in their anxiety to be considered as fellow-sufferers with the seamen were driven to make some curiously ineffective complaints. They said that their captain was incapable of drilling the men; that he paraded them on wet days; that he made them wash their white shirts in sea water; and that when they were on parade, he was in the habit of standing at a distance, on the quarter-deck ladder, and abusing them in a loud voice with such epithets as " 'beasts in human shape, a disgrace to the corps,' and other degrading terms."[2] The crew of the *Defiance* even complained that a lieutenant had mentioned the previous mutiny, in violation of the promise that the mutiny should be buried in oblivion.[3]

It has been remarked in regard to the surgeons that they were by no means all guilty of malpractices, and the same observation applies to the officers as a whole. Some of the captains, for instance, were thoroughly popular with their crews.[4] And some of the officers who were charged with cruelty may have been normally humane men, who were liable to occasional outbursts of anger. There must often have been provocation for such outbursts, in the management of crews drawn in part from the lowest ranks of society; and the conduct of the seamen at times deserved very severe punishment. Colpoys, when he was investigating the charges of cruelty on the *Nymphe*, found that various members of the crew had been guilty of embezzlement, drunkenness,

1. Stirling to Bridport, 24 April (A.S.I. 107, J 225).
2. Howe's report (A.S.I. 4172).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *E.g.*, the captains of the *Amphitrite* and *Eurydice* at Spithead, and of the *Clyde*, *San Fiorenzo*, *Espion* and *Niger* at the Nore. Most of the captains who were notably popular seem to have had command of comparatively small ships (all the ships mentioned above were frigates). Perhaps the reason is that they were able to make an individual acquaintance with the men to an extent that was impossible to the officers of line-of-battle ships.

desertion, personal uncleanness, and assaults on petty officers.[1]

But when allowance is made for every circumstance that might tend to justify the conduct of the officers, it must be admitted that the seamen on some ships were subjected to a needless amount of cruelty. If it were not so, there would not have been such a numerous migration of officers from the ships at Spithead, the Admiralty would not have yielded so readily to the seamen at the end of the second mutiny, and the mutineers themselves would not have shown such an "unalterable determination"[2] to be rid of certain officers who were specified by name. There are limits of severity—varying with the character of the subjects—within which discipline may be considered adequate and fair. And it cannot be doubted that some officers, in all the fleets concerned in the mutiny, persistently overstepped the limit, by reason of an innate love of despotism. The crew of the *Pompée*, in a letter to Howe, gave a proper estimate of the justice that underlay the movement against the officers:

> "My Lord," they wrote, "we do not wish you to understand that we have the least intention of encroaching on the punishments necessary for the preservation of good order and discipline necessary to be preserved in H.M. navy, but to crush the spirit of tyranny and oppression so much practised and delighted in, contrary to the spirit or intent of any laws of our country."[3]

The practical issue of the movement was concisely expressed by the crew of the *Minotaur*: "Let us have good officers, and we remain loyal subjects to our King and Country."[4]

Harsh discipline, bad food, and the low rate of wages

1. A.S.I. 107, J 228.
2. This phrase was used by Howe in a letter from Portsmouth, 12 May (A.S.I. 579).
3. Howe's report, u.s.
4. *Ibid.*

were the three great grievances of the seamen. So long as any of these grievances persisted, the conditions of naval life could never be wholly satisfactory; and when they were remedied, no serious ground of complaint could be left. It is pleasant to observe that in consequence of the mutinies—or rather as a result of the Spithead mutinies—all these evils were to a large extent removed. An increase in the rate of wages and the measure of supplies and an improvement in the quality of the provisions were secured by a larger parliamentary grant; and a reform in the method of discipline was brought about by the action of the Admiralty. It is an evidence of this change of policy, that the number of courts-martial on officers for ill-treatment of the seamen increased for a few years after the mutinies, then rapidly declined.[1] Clearly, "the spirit of tyranny and oppression" was thoroughly subdued. Indeed some of the older officers, a generation later, believed that the reform had been carried too far, and looked back with some favour to the time when it had been possible to visit refractory seamen with a punishment adequate to the offence.[2]

1. *Clowes*, vol. iv, p. 180.
2. *E.g.*, *Cunningham*, p. 112: "Experience has convinced every individual who knows the nature of that service that . . . without the terror of a proper chastisement hanging over the head of the ill-disposed man, and acting as a restraint upon his mischievous propensities, a man of good character, who is disposed to do his duty strictly, could not remain on board. . . . ."

CHAPTER XX.

Other Grievances.

Although the grievances that have been considered were undoubtedly the most important, the seamen suffered other hardships which helped to arouse their resentment. Perhaps the most notable evil was the system of impressment. Popular imagination, instructed, and not altogether misinformed by cartoons and nautical novels, has conceived the press-gang to be one of the most vicious institutions of the eighteenth century. It is surprising, therefore, to find that the mutineers made no attempt to abolish impressment, and, in their negotiations with the Admiralty, showed no sign that they regarded the system as unjust or undesirable. The only mention of the subject that appears in the official records is a demand of the Nore mutineers that two months' wages should be paid in advance to pressed men so that they might provide themselves with an outfit of slops.[1] It might be inferred from their silence that they found no fault with the system and were willing that it should continue. Certainly the press-gang did not appear to the seamen of the eighteenth century to be such an evil and tyrannical device as the modern mind imagines it to have been. If the press-gang were introduced at the present time it would be met with a storm of indignation, and it is difficult to realize that the institution was less hateful to earlier generations. But a new imposition or duty is always more irksome than an imposition or duty that is familiar and expected.[2] In the eighteenth century im-

1. Art. 5 of the original demands (*Ann. Reg.*, u.s.).

2. *E.g.*, the income-tax which was at first only tolerated as a temporary expedient, but is now regarded as a particularly fair and satisfactory form of taxation.

pressment was an established fact, and the sailor, from the time of his first adventure in a merchant ship, knew that he was liable to be drafted into the navy. Moreover, in respect of danger and discomfort there was little to choose between the naval and the merchant services, and in some ways a naval career was preferable to life in trading vessels.[1]

Yet it must not be assumed that the mutineers approved the system of impressment or were indifferent to its faults. It is true that many of them had entered the navy as ordinary volunteers or as quota-men. And it is true that the most determined enemies of the press-gangs were not the seamen themselves, but rather their families and friends, and the shipowners, who objected to a forcible diminution of the supply of labour.[2] But a considerable proportion of the mutineers were pressed men; and in all probability there was not a man in the whole navy who would have regretted the abolition of impressment. It is an indication of strong feeling against impressment—in the Nore fleet at least—that the author of the song "Whilst landsmen wander" should refer to "the impressing fiends," and should rail against the "minions of a court," who "vindicate impressing."[3] And it is significant that the mutineer who visited John Carter's public house in Leman Street, boasted that there would be no more pressing after his return.[4] The absence of any mention of this grievance from the demands of the seamen was almost certainly due to the impossibility of redress. An attempt to secure the abolition of impressment would have been entirely futile,

1. *Cunningham*, pp. 114 *sqq.*

2. In drawings representing affrays between press-gangs and the public, the chief assailants are usually women. A few months after the mutinies Captain Brenton, the regulating officer at Leith (father of the historian), complained that his gang had been attacked by a mob headed by shipmasters, and that the city magnates had taken the side of the mob (Captains' Letters B, A.S.I. 1517, 4 October).

3. Papers of the *Repulse* (A.S.I. 727, C 370a), no. 2.

4. Solicitor's letters, 16 June: Evidence of John and Sarah Carter (A.S.I. 3685).

and would only have prejudiced those in authority against the more moderate claims of the seamen.

Impressment was, in fact, essential to the continuance of the navy. The Admiralty tried to encourage voluntary enlistment by offering enormous bounties, but those who might be attracted by the financial reward were repelled by the bad conditions of life in the navy. The attempts to attract volunteers met with so little success that at the height of the war only half the men in the fleet had enlisted of their own accord. The other half had to be supplied by the press-gang.[1] It has been said that in some ways the naval service compared favourably with service in merchant ships; but in one respect it was very much less desirable. The loss of personal liberty was a disadvantage that outweighed most other considerations. It was probably the thought of this sacrifice that chiefly restrained the merchant seaman from entering the navy and accepting the generous bounty. As long as he was serving on private vessels he was comparatively free. His contract was for a single voyage, and if he was not satisfied with his treatment he could leave the ship when the voyage was done. Moreover, the merchant seaman was absolutely free between the voyages to go ashore, to visit his friends, and to enjoy himself to the full extent of his inclination or his purse. But the seamen of the navy were enlisted for a term of years. They had to remain on their ship so long as it was in commission; and while they were on board—in many cases for several years together—they were subject to the rigorous discipline and the unpleasant conditions that gave strength to the spirit of mutiny. In these circumstances it was not remarkable that the applicants for bounties were few. Even the reforms carried out after the mutinies did not induce men to enter the naval service. During the fourteen months of the Peace of

1. *Cunningham*, p. 113

Amiens[1] the volunteers who enlisted were not enough to fill a single ship.[2] It was not until the conditions of life in the navy were made thoroughly attractive that the need for impressment ceased.

Impressment at the best was an ugly necessity, though it was not perhaps such a serious evil as it is usually supposed to have been. It is not often remembered that impressment was only practised on a large scale in time of war, nor that seafaring men were the only persons liable to compulsory service in the navy. The system was sometimes abused, for there were many "state-the-case" men in the fleet,—men who considered themselves unjustly impressed, but were forced to remain on the ships while the authorities, who were not anxious to dispense with their services, dealt with their cases at leisure. However, although justice might be deferred, or might sometimes fail, the bundles of "Protections from being Pressed," which are preserved in the Admiralty records, are an evidence that the abuse was not without a remedy.

But one form of impressment was particularly and needlessly objectionable. It was a common practice to send out tenders equipped with press-gangs to meet incoming merchantmen and take away a part of their crews for service in the navy. The unfortunate seamen, who had often been away from home for many years, were drafted directly into the ships on which they were to serve, or were sent as supernumeraries to the flagship of the port-admiral. In either case they had no opportunity of going ashore, and they had no prospect of seeing their homes again until their new ships were put out of commission.

1. Or perhaps nineteen months, from the Preliminaries of London to the renewal of war (October 1801—May 1803).

2. Patton, *Natural Defence of an Insular Empire* (1810), pp. 70, 71. Admiral Patton was strongly opposed to impressment, *e.g.*, he wrote (p. 63): "It is contrary to common sense to suppose that the prime and leading seamen, who are to defend this country, can safely be compelled to serve." At the time of the mutinies Patton was employed in the Transport Office at Portsmouth.

A letter from Buckingham to his brother, George Grenville, written near the beginning of the war, illustrates the working of this disagreeable system, and shows that the impressment of a large body of men was regarded by the authorities not only as a necessity, but as a matter for congratulation :

> Most cordially do I give you joy of the arrival of the Jamaica and Lisbon fleets.[1] I shall be impatient to learn what numbers of men have been taken out of them; but I know it is estimated that these 250 sail ought to give 2000 men, and God knows your fleet wants them. It is, however, certain that there are many seamen in every port, if the press was as hot as it might be.[2]

As a result of impressing on the sea it often happened that men remained on board for several years together. The crew of the *Intrepid*, for example, shortly after the second Spithead mutiny, asked for two days' leave of absence, for the reason that many of them had never been on shore since the beginning of the war—that is, for four years.[3] And the delegates at the Nore, in their commentary on the second article of their demands, said that men pressed after a voyage were often kept at sea for two, three or four years together.[4]

The strict confinement to the ships at times when the fleet was in port was irksome even to volunteers and to men who had been impressed on land. But at such times it must have been still more irritating to men who had been impressed on the sea, that no respite was allowed them from their monotonous and unhealthy manner of life. It is not surprising that the mutineers at Spithead should include in their petitions a demand that they should be allowed to go ashore, under suitable

1. *I.e.*, convoys of merchant ships.
2. *Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 422.
3. Captain Robert Parker to Sir Peter Parker, 28 May, A.S.I. 1022, A 503.
4. Address to the Nation, Papers of the *Repulse*, No. 22.

regulations, when their ships were in port.[1] To many of them this reform may have seemed the most desirable and urgent of all the changes for which they were contending. The grievance, however, was common both to officers and seamen. Officers of very high rank were liable to be away from home for long periods. Collingwood, as he was setting out on his last voyage, said to Sir Byam Martin: "My family are actually strangers to me."[2] And his experience was by no means unusual.

The chief object of the Admiralty in confining the men to their ships was, of course, to prevent them from deserting. But it was a very unhealthy state of affairs that made such a precaution necessary. There was an obvious danger in committing the defence of the country to men who had had so little heart in the service that they were ready to desert at the first opportunity.[3]

The mutineers only made indirect allusion to the evils of impressment, and they had no hope of any alteration in the system. But in another case a definite and reasonable demand was refused by the Admiralty. One of the great attractions of service in the navy was the chance of adding substantially to the wages by rewards for the capture of the enemies' ships. The seamen complained, however, that their share of the prize-money

1. "That your Lordships will be so kind as to look into this affair, which is nowise unreasonable; and that we may be looked upon as a number of men standing in defence of our country; and that we may in somewise have grant and opportunity to taste the sweets of liberty on shore, when in any harbour, and when we have completed the duty of our ship, after our return from sea; and, that no man may encroach upon his liberty, there shall be a boundary limited, and those trespassing further—without a written order from the commanding officer—shall be punished according to the rules of the navy; which is a natural request, and congenial to the heart of man, and certainly to us, that you make the boast of being guardians of the land." (Petition to the Admiralty, 18 April, Art. 4, *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 241.) The Nore mutineers unnecessarily made a similar demand: "That every man, upon a ship's coming into harbour, shall have liberty (a certain number at a time, so as not to injure the ship's duty) to go and see their friends and families, a convenient time to be allowed to each man" (*ibid.*, p. 245).

2. *Letters of Sir T. B. Martin*, vol. iii, p. 398.

3. *Potton* (p. 30) mentions the difficulty of controlling "seamen collected by violence, and consequently in the habit of deeming both mutiny and desertion as privileges attached to their situation."

was inadequate. No one could deny that a large share was due to the senior officers, who directed the tactics of an engagement, and were held responsible in case of failure. But the common seamen also deserved generous treatment, for they played an essential part in the adventure, and the danger was as great for them as it was for the officers. There is no doubt that the complaint of the seamen was justified.[1] The extent of the grievance was stated, perhaps with some exaggeration, in the "Address to the Nation" written at the Nore: "What can be more absurd, not to say unjust, than for an officer to receive perhaps £200, when at the same time a foremast-man—who runs as much risk of his life, and whose life is as dear to his wife and children as that officer's—receives but 12/- or 14/-? What a shameful disproportion! Why should not that officer's pay be sufficient without having such an enormous share of prize-money?"[2] The mutineers of the North Sea fleet demanded that three-fifths of the prize-money should be divided among the common seamen, and two-fifths among the officers. They said that "gentlemen worthy of that appellation, or possessed of the least spark of justice and humanity," would consider such a share to be "as equal a proportion as honest men could require or have a right to expect."[3] The Lords of the Admiralty, however, were unwilling to make any alteration in the existing system. It was their policy to refuse all the demands of the Nore mutineers. Moreover, an increased grant of prize-money to the seamen would imply a reduction in the share of the officers, and to call upon the officers to sacrifice a part of their income would be a poor return for their services in opposing the mutineers. It was probably for this reason that the

1. "This demand appeared, to the generality of men, founded upon the strictest equity. Had they confined their petition to this particular, it was thought, at the time, that they would have been seconded by the seamen of the whole navy" (*Ann. Reg.*, p. 219).

2. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 22.

3. *Ibid.*, no. 25.

demand was rejected when it was referred to the Board by the delegates at Spithead. But there was some danger in the refusal. The mutineers at the Nore blamed the delegates of Bridport's squadron for abandoning the claim;[1] and there is reason to believe that the action of the delegates caused some murmuring in the Channel fleet itself. The anonymous letter from Portsmouth, that has already been quoted, suggests such discontent,[2] and the rumour contained in this letter was confirmed by a report by Graham, the magistrate, that the mutineers, "to a man almost," were "resolved to renew the disturbance on the fleet's return to Spithead, upon the ground of prize-money."[3] There may have been a good foundation for the rumour, but if the seamen of the Channel fleet did contemplate a fresh mutiny, they were not able to carry out their scheme. Possibly they were deterred by the severe and numerous punishments that followed the Nore mutiny, and by the fate of the six seamen who led the disaffection on the *Pompée*. And it is certain that if there had been another mutiny, the seamen of the Channel fleet would not have been so nearly unanimous as they had been in the two great revolts at Spithead. The delegates had promised that they would not take part in any other rising, and some of them were reliable and honest men who would not lightly go back on their word.

Thus the grievance in the matter of prize-money was allowed to go unredressed. It is said that as Nelson's fleet was preparing for action at Trafalgar a seaman expressed the hope that the bullets might be distributed "like the prize-money—the lion's share to the officers."[4] The story may not be authentic, but its existence suggests that the grievance was still wrankling in the minds of

1. *Ann. Reg.*, p. 215.
2. See above, p. 85.
3. A.S.I. 4172, 22 May.
4. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt*, p. 113 n.

the seamen more than seven years after the collapse of the mutinous movement.

The most important complaints of the mutineers have now been considered, and the description—though it is by no means adequate as an account of the conditions of life in the navy—may serve to show that the seamen had good cause to ask for a reform in naval administration. And we must admit that there was some justification for their refusal to weigh anchor when they found that their petitions had been ignored. It may be assumed then that the mutinies were not part of a movement inspired by sheer caprice or malice; but that there was justice, at least in the earlier demands of the mutineers; that service in the navy involved hardships which were in no way essential to a seafaring life; and that the cause of the mutineers was such as might commend itself to a sober and normally well-disposed seaman. There could be no clearer proof of the reality of the grievances than the desire commonly shown to escape from the navy. Desertions were frequent; and the deserters often chose to forgo their claim to wages and prize-money rather than to endure any longer the misery of life on board.[1] When, at the beginning of the Peace in 1802, a large number of ships were put out of commission, many of the seamen sailed immediately to foreign countries, without so much as setting foot on shore, in order to avoid further service in the navy.[2]

1. *E.g.*, seamen from the *Nymphe* and *Minotaur* had left the wages due to them, and had run (see complaints from the *Nymphe*, A.S.I. 107, J 228; complaints from the *Minotaur*, *ibid.*, 224).
2. *Patton*, pp. 71, 72.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Comparison with Earlier Conditions.

In the *Annual Register* for 1797,[1] it is remarked that "the patience with which so resolute a class of men had so long submitted to a treatment which they did not certainly deserve was much more an object of surprise, than the determination they came to finally, to insist upon and to enforce a redress of their grievances." But the statement that the seamen "had so long submitted" to an unjust and oppressive system leads back to the second question, raised at the beginning of this book: Were the conditions of life in the navy in 1797 worse than the conditions which had existed for a considerable time before the Mutinies? A full answer would involve a long study of the history of naval administration; but a few examples may provide an adequate comparison.

In regard to wages, the seamen in the eighteenth century had certainly suffered on account of the rise in prices. Wages normally vary more slowly than other prices, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the pay of the seamen had been roughly adjusted to the diminishing value of money. In the early part of the sixteenth century, when the standing navy was in its infancy, the ordinary pay of a seaman was sixpence a day, but there was no provision of food or clothing. During the century the purchasing power of money fell, because of debasement of the coinage and the increased supply of bullion from gold and silver mines, until it was only half as great as it had been in the year 1500. In the meantime the government had made a good

1. P. 207.

bargain by undertaking the provision of food, and allowing the seamen 6s. 8d. a month, or slightly less than threepence a day, for other purposes. The food for each man cost about sevenpence a day; therefore the total expenditure on each seaman for a day was tenpence—the equivalent of fivepence at the beginning of the century. But in 1585 an allowance was made for the change in the value of money, and the wages of an ordinary seaman were raised to 10s. od. a month.[1] Again, in the reign of Charles I, they were increased to 15s. od. But the King, although he was anxious to extend the sea-power of Great Britain, had more regard for the ships than for the men. The rate which he established was not adequate to the change in prices, and Cromwell raised it to 19s. od. It was definitely fixed at this sum in the reign of Charles II, and the wages of the common seamen were not altered again until the time of the Mutinies, although the price of commodities rose considerably during the eighteenth century.

This stagnation in the rate of wages was probably due to the control of supplies by Parliament, and the management of naval affairs by a board. An increase of wages would be more likely to come from an absolute ruler acting on the advice of a single Lord High Admiral, than it would from a House of Commons advised by a group of Lords Commissioners. But, whatever might be the cause of the disparity, the fact remained that the seamen in 1797 were not so well paid as their predecessors had been in the reign of Charles II. As general prices gradually increased, the poverty of the seamen became more acute. The nominal wage remained the same, but the real wage was persistently falling.

It is most important, however, to notice that the change was gradual. There had been no attempt to reduce the nominal wage: there had been no sudden rise

1. Froude, *History of England*, vol. ix, pp. 360, 361; *Robinson*, p. 335.

in general prices. And although the earlier petitions dealt only with the question of wages, it is impossible to indicate any single event which could have given rise to widespread discontent, or could have caused a spontaneous demand for higher pay.

The absence of any immediate occasion for mutiny is still more conspicuous in the case of provisions. The dietary in the navy had always been bad; and in some respects it was better at the end of the eighteenth century than it had been in earlier times. Cooks, for example, had been chosen in 1704, by order of the Lord High Admiral from the "cripples and maimed persons" who were drawing pensions from the Chatham chest.[1] In the latter part of the century they were no longer preferred for their disabilities. And only two years before the Mutinies a great improvement in the health of the seamen had been effected by the introduction of lime-juice to counteract the evil effects of the salted meat.[2] But, in general, the quality of victuals supplied to the navy had been constant for a long time. In the reign of Elizabeth the common dietary was very limited in scope. It included only bread, biscuit, salt or fresh meat, with fish on fast-days, and a little butter once or twice a week. To compensate for the dulness of this routine of victualling, a generous measure of beer was allowed.[3] The quality of the provisions is suggested in Raleigh's statement that "in the late Queen's reign many did miscarry by the corruption as well of drink as of meat." The beer was often stored at this time, as it was in the eighteenth century, in casks that had been used for fish or oil. A generation later the dietary was very much the same, but it was varied with an occasional supply of pork

1. *Robinson*, p. 139. The object was, presumably, to give regular employment to these persons, so that they would not have need of the pensions.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

3. *Froude*, vol. ix, u.s.

or bacon and peas,[1] and a little cheese on three days of the week.[2] The victualling was managed by private contractors, but in 1692 their duties were assumed by the government, and the supplies were administered by a Victualling Board.[3] The change, however, did not effect an improvement in the quality of the provisions. A pamphleteer wrote in 1703: "A hot country, stinking meat, maggoty bread, noisome and poisonous scent of the bilge-water, have made many a brave sailor food for crabs and sharks. . . . Where we had one man dyed by shot in the navy, we had ten dyed by means of bad provisions."[4] In one respect, at least, the seamen in these early times suffered more hardship than the seamen who revolted in 1797; for in addition to the allowance for leakage, many of the pursers and other officials kept back a part of the supplies in order to increase their own income. The practice was condemned in the General Instructions issued in the reign of Charles II:

> It is become a frequent (though insufferable) abuse, that the Officers intrusted with his Majesties Stores, as well of Victualls as Ammunition, Rigging, and Carpenters Stores do imbezill the same very often before they be brought on board.[5]

The officers at the end of the eighteenth century must have been more cautious. If embezzlement had been at all common, the mutineers would certainly have included it among their grievances. But it does not appear that any officers, other than a few surgeons, were charged with misappropriating provisions.

No important change in the dietary took place during

1. Pork and peas were frequently served at the time of the mutinies. It is interesting to notice that this dish was being cooked on board the *Monarch* at the battle of Copenhagen. A shot struck the kettle and scattered the contents; but the seamen picked up the morsels from the deck and ate them as they were fighting the guns (Southey, *Life of Nelson*, Chap. vii).

2. *Robinson*, p. 133.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

5. *General Instructions*, etc., issued (in 1670 ?) by James, Duke of York (Brit. Mus., 8806, n. 31), Art. vii.

the eighteenth century. It may be concluded, therefore, that the provisions supplied at the time of the Mutinies were at least as good as those supplied in any earlier period of naval administration; and that the mutineers of 1797 had no greater cause to complain of bad and insufficient food than many generations of seamen had had before them. The only difference in their situation was that their "extras" were more expensive. The seaman fared very badly unless he could buy from the purser some provisions rather more enticing than those supplied by the Victualling Board. And as prices rose the amount of these "extras" diminished.

The third grievance of the seamen was harsh discipline. This grievance also was less serious at the time of the Mutinies than it had been at any previous time. Naval discipline had always been severe, partly because the general conditions of life at sea were rough, and partly because the isolation of a ship made it necessary that the commander should have absolute authority over the men. The sailors who served Queen Elizabeth were described as a "loose rabble . . . vagrant, lewd, and disorderly," and such men could not be controlled by mild measures. Some of the penalties inflicted on them were extremely severe, and it seems that a rigorous standard of discipline was maintained throughout the seventeenth century.[1] In the original Articles of War, issued by the first Parliament of Charles II, the punishments as a whole were very severe, and the death penalty was prescribed for a large proportion of the offences. The stern tradition of naval law was upheld by a clause providing that "all other faults committed at sea should be punished according to the customs used at sea."[2] Even at the end of the century such savage punishments as ducking,

1. "The sailors, famished when they were not poisoned, seldom clothed, and hardly ever paid, were kept together by flogging, keel-hauling and other sea tortures, on men-of-war that were often little better than ill-managed convict hulks and ill-supplied plague hospitals" (G. M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, p. 183).

2. Art. xxxvi.

fasting, keel-hauling and tongue-scraping were still practised. But before the time of the Mutinies the customs had changed. In 1778 the Articles of War were revised: the number of capital offences was reduced, and courts-martial were in many cases allowed to substitute milder punishments for those prescribed in the statute.[1] The amended Articles of War remained in force in 1797, and there was at that time no great disparity between the system of naval discipline and the administration of criminal law on land. In fact there is good reason for believing that, if the Mutinies had never occurred or had been immediately suppressed, the humanitarian movement that was influencing legal customs on shore would still have produced a change in the demeanour of naval officers towards the seamen. If there was any justification for the complaints of slackness made a generation later by Cunningham and Brenton, the slackness was probably due rather to an excess of humanitarian feeling than to the fear of another mutiny.

And it is noticeable that the mutineers did not find serious fault with the system of discipline, but with individual officers who had abused their authority. The real grievance was their subjection, not to oppressive law, but to tyrannical men. It is true that the Nore mutineers demanded a revision of the Articles of War. But the demand certainly was not unanimous. There must have been in the Nore fleet many sober and reliable men who seldom transgressed the regulations of the navy. Any relaxation of discipline would be entirely to the disadvantage of such men, for it would set a premium on indolence and disorder. Moreover, the delegates of the Nore fleet showed their approval of stern measures of correction by floggings and duckings of their own authority. And it will be remembered that they even claimed, though they did not exercise, the power of life and death over their fellow-seamen. It cannot be said,

1. *Robinson,* p. 176.

therefore, that the discipline of the navy was extraordinarily severe at the time of the Mutinies. And the few examples that have been given show clearly enough that the general conditions of the seamen's life in 1797 were no worse than they had been at any earlier time. The Admiralty had made no attempt to deprive the seamen of their constitutional rights: the officers, as a whole, had not been unusually aggressive. Such innovations as there had been all tended to improve the terms of service.

The grievances brought forward by the mutineers might have been urged with greater force by earlier generations of seamen. The condition of the fleet at the beginning of the seventeenth century, for example, must have been quite as bad as it was in 1797. Sir Walter Raleigh said that the seamen of his time went "with as great a grudging to serve in his Majesty's ships as if it were to be slaves in the galley"; and in 1625 the naval commissioners complained: "The pressed men run away as fast as we send them down."[1] In the eighteenth century discerning people, long before the time of the Mutinies, had realized that the state of the navy was unsatisfactory, and had pointed out the proper remedy. As early as 1745, Admiral Vernon had said in Parliament: "It will be necessary to reconcile the affections of the seamen to the public service by a more humane treatment. . . . I have long lamented their situation, and made some faint attempts towards relieving it."[2] Writers of fiction had called public attention to the hardships endured by the seamen; and in 1786 a bill for the reform of naval administration had twice been brought before Parliament.[3]

The mutineers themselves appreciated the fact that there was nothing new in the hardships of which they

1. *Robinson*, p. 338.
2. D. Ford, *Admiral Vernon and the Navy*, p. 251.
3. See Sheridan's speech in the Commons, 19 May, 1797 (*Parl. Hist.*, xxxiii, 642).

complained. They even represented the antiquity of their grievances as being in itself a grievance. In their "Address to the Nation" the delegates of the Nore fleet mentioned "the unbounded oppression and cruelty that has from time immemorial been shown to us." The author of one of the songs of the mutiny spoke of the "brave seamen that 'add long been forgot.'" And the committee of the *Repulse*, in their first letter to the delegates, made allusion to "their grievance which had been of too long standing."[1]

It has been shown in this chapter, firstly, that the seamen who took part in the mutiny had endured considerable and unnecessary evils, that they had good reason to complain of their low wages, bad food, severe discipline, and of other injustices and irritating restrictions of their liberty; and secondly, that none of the grievances were new, that there had been no single event, no fresh imposition, which could explain the sudden determination to rise in revolt. How came it, then, that the men who were serving in the home fleets in 1797 refused to bear the measure of affliction that had been endured by many thousands of men before them? Clearly the difference was in the men themselves; and in order to discover the ultimate reason of the mutiny it will be necessary to examine the character and cause of the change that had taken place in the minds of the seamen.

1. Cf. the preamble to the petition of 18 April, from Spithead: "We, the seamen of his Majesty's fleet, take the liberty of addressing your Lordships in an humble petition, showing the many hardships and oppressions we have laboured under for many years . . ." (*Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 240).

BOOK VI.

The Political Aspect of the Mutinies

CHAPTER XXII.

The Rights of Man.

The characteristic which distinguished the seamen who mutinied in 1797 from the seamen of earlier times was the idea, universally accepted by the mutineers, that the hardships which they had endured were not essential to life in the navy, but were in a large measure grievances which might be, and ought to be, redressed. Such an idea was clearly the first condition of the Mutinies. And there can be no doubt that its existence was due in part to the influence of the theory of natural rights. It appears that the democratic ideals which were overspreading the whole of Europe had penetrated into the navy, and had convinced the seamen that the conditions of their service were not such as became free citizens, least of all those to whom the safety of the country was largely entrusted. Such a conclusion might be drawn from the circumstances of the Mutinies. The seamen would not have organized themselves deliberately with the object of enforcing reform unless their action had been prompted by some special inducement. And since no outward event had occurred which could give rise to unusual discontent, it seems probable that the mutineers were actuated by some theoretical principle [1] which revealed to them both the extent of their sufferings and the benefits that might result from a movement of reform, and led them to regard the redress of their grievances as an inherent and indisputable right.

1. I use this phrase by way of contrast to the idea of a material grievance; *e.g.*, in the rising of 1381, the poll tax might be regarded as the practical occasion; and the conception of equality preached by John Ball, and the desire of the peasants to be rid of their legal and economic bondage, as the theoretical motives.

But the conclusion that the seamen were influenced by the new political theories is not based on argument alone; for there is direct evidence of political feeling, in the incidents of the revolt and in the writings of the mutineers. In the first place, the change of opinion, the development of a sense of individual importance, which underlay the mutinous movement, is reflected in the words of the delegates at Spithead. In their first petition to the Admiralty they wrote: "We, your petitioners, do not boast of our good services for any other purpose than that of putting you and the nation in mind of the respect due to us."[1] And the idea is expressed in a more definite and outspoken manner in an address written at the Nore in the most stormy period of the mutiny: "Long have we been endeavouring to find ourselves men. We now find ourselves so. We will be treated as such." It would be difficult to imagine any more concise and exact description of the new spirit that had appeared in the navy—a spirit that is abroad in every period of revolution. The author of this address makes significant use of such familiar catch words as "common rights," and the "Age of Reason"; and the source of the opinions that he professed is suggested by the fact that a seaman of the *Espion*—a ship which was distinguished for loyalty at the time of the Nore mutiny—was found to have in his possession a copy of Paine's *Rights of Man*.[2]

One copy of the address was given to Lord Northesk with the list of grievances and the petition to the King. Another copy was brought ashore by the pilot of the American ship, who gave evidence at the court-martial of Gregory of the *Sandwich*. Gregory gave this copy to the pilot, with instructions to have it printed, and posted up on the pillars of the Exchange and other public places, and to order a parcel of the handbills to be sent on board the *Sandwich*. And he gave the pilot three

1. *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 240.
2. Pro. H., 12 September (Digest).

guineas to pay for the printing. The address had evidently been passed by the central committee of the fleet, and it gives such a clear insight into the minds and intentions of the delegates that it deserves to be reproduced at length :

The Delegates of the different Ships at the Nore assembled in Council, to their fellow-Subjects :—

Countrymen,

It is to you particularly that we owe an explanation of our conduct. His Majesty's Ministers too well know our intentions, which are founded on the laws of humanity, honour and national safety,—long since trampled underfoot by those who ought to have been friends to us—the sole protectors of your laws and property. The public prints teem with falsehoods and misrepresentations to induce you to credit things as far from our design as the conduct of those at the helm of national affairs is from honesty or common decorum.

Shall we who have endured the toils of a tedious, disgraceful war, be the victims of tyranny and oppression which vile, gilded, pampered knaves, wallowing in the lap of luxury, choose to load us with ? Shall we, who amid the rage of the tempest and the war of jarring elements, undaunted climb the unsteady cordage and totter on the top-mast's dreadful height, suffer ourselves to be treated worse than the dogs of London Streets ? Shall we, who in the battle's sanguinary rage, confound, terrify and subdue your proudest foe, guard your coasts from invasion, your children from slaughter, and your lands from pillage—be the footballs and shuttlecocks [1] of a set of tyrants who derive from us alone their honours, their titles and their fortunes ? No, the Age of Reason has at length revolved. Long have we been endeavouring to find ourselves men. We now find ourselves so. We will be treated as such. Far, very far, from us is the idea of subverting the government of our beloved country. We have the highest opinion of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and we hope none of those measures taken to deprive us of the common rights of men have been instigated by him.

You cannot, countrymen, form the most distant idea of the slavery under which we have for many years laboured. Rome had her Neros and Caligulas, but how many characters of

1. In Lord Northesk's copy : " footballs, shuttlecocks, and Merry Andrews."

their description might we not mention in the British Fleet—men without the least tincture of humanity, without the faintest spark of virtue, education or abilities, exercising the most wanton acts of cruelty over those whom dire misfortune or patriotic zeal may have placed in their power—basking in the sunshine of prosperity, whilst we (need we repeat who we are?) labour under every distress which the breast of inhumanity can suggest. The British Seaman has often with justice been compared to the Lion—gentle, generous and humane—no one would certainly wish to hurt such an animal.[1] Hitherto we have laboured for our sovereign and you. We are now obliged to think for ourselves, for there are many (nay, most of us) in the Fleet who have been prisoners since the commencement of the War, without receiving a single farthing. Have we not a right to complain? Let His Majesty but order us to be paid and the little grievances we have made known redressed, we shall enter with alacrity upon any employment for the defence of our country; but until that is complied with we are determined to stop all commerce and intercept all provisions, for our own subsistence. The military have had their pay augmented, to insult as well as enslave you. Be not appalled. We will adopt the words of a celebrated motto (*Dieu et mon Droit*) and defy all attempts to deceive us. We do not wish to adopt the plan of a neighbouring nation, however it may have been suggested; but we (will) sell our lives dearly to maintain what we have demanded. Nay, countrymen, more: We have already discovered the tricks of Government in supplying our enemies with different commodities, and a few days will probably lead to something more. In the meantime,

We remain, Dear Countrymen,

Yours affectionately,[2]

1. Cf., "Their hearts are all true, they're like Lyons, I say," and "the Lions boldly roused," in the songs quoted in Appendix A. Perhaps the writer of this address had read the story of Androcles; but the mild virtues indicated here are hardly such as we should associate with lions in general or with the British seamen of the eighteenth century.

2. The version which is quoted here is given in the notes of Gregory's court-martial, William Wilson's evidence, A.S.I. 5486.

Lork Northesk's copy, which has a few variant readings is among the Miscellaneous Letters and Petitions, A.S.I. 5125. I have preferred Wilson's version because it was intended for publication, and may be taken as the address which was finally adopted by the delegates. The pilot

In addition to this groping after vague and questionable "rights," there appeared in the fleet a strong and definite desire for liberty. It is easy to understand the reason of such a desire, particularly in the case of the landsmen who had been used to the freedom of civilian life, and found themselves suddenly subjected to a strict system of discipline and closely confined to their ships, with the prospect of remaining for several years in unhappy isolation. In the writings of the seamen there are many allusions to this desire. The delegates of the Channel fleet described their demand for leave to go ashore as "a natural request, and congenial to the heart of man, and certainly to us, that make the boast of being the guardians of the land." [1] And the delegates at the Nore, in their "Address to the Nation," repeated the comment in a more emphatic paraphrase:

> Art. 2. Liberty. This invaluable privilege, more particularly inherent to an Englishman, the pride and boast of a Briton, the natural right of all, has always been denied to us, us who they allow to be the bulwark and glory of Britain and the bright gems in the English Crown, to us who have, by our services, rendered this Kingdom at once the envy, the admiration and the imitation of all Europe.[2]

In the papers of the *Queen Charlotte* there is an outburst of bitter complaint against the restrictions of naval life:

> As for English tars to be the legitimate sons of liberty, it is an old cry which we have experienced, and knows it to be false. God knows, the constitution, we know, is admirably well calculated for the safety and happiness of his Majesty's subjects who live by employment on shore; but, alas, we are

1. *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 241.
2. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 20.

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apparently did not carry out his instructions. He probably took his copy to the Admiralty, but he did not say in his evidence how he had disposed of the three guineas.

In Lord Northesk's version the address is signed: "Your loving Brothers, Red for Ever."

not considered as subjects of the same sovereign, unless it be to drag us by force from our families to fight the battles of a country which refuses us the protection of the constitution by which the rest of his Majesty's subjects enjoy so much happiness.[1]

In another note from the same ship there is a distinct appeal to natural rights:

By telling us we are the legitimate sons of liberty you overthrow your own purposes. We are at last completely sensible that we are so by Nature, and therefore determined to crave our celestial mother's blessing so long withheld from us by usurping tutors.

The writers of these passages, although they might find it difficult to define the term, had evidently conceived the idea that liberty was a political right from which they were debarred by service in the navy. The same idea is expressed still more forcibly in a passionate song that was circulated among the mutineers at the Nore:

If Liberty be ours, oh, say why are not all protected?
Why is the hand of ruffian sway
'Gainst seamen thus directed?
Is this your proof of British rights?
Is this rewarding bravery?
Oh, shame to boast your tars' exploits,
Then doom those tars to slavery.[2]

Another song of the Nore mutineers contains a curious allusion to the state of natural innocence which was postulated by Locke and Rousseau:

1. Answer to an article in the *Sun* (Papers of the *Queen Charlotte*, A.S.I. 5125). In this article the spirit of Kempenfelt was represented as rebuking the seamen for disloyalty. Reprints of the article, in the form of handbills, were sent to Portsmouth, and were probably distributed in the fleet. Some copies which reached Lord Bridport are preserved among his letters. This was the sentence which, not unnaturally, gave particular offence to the seamen: "What will they (the Jacobins) not have room to say when England's Tars, the legitimate sons of Liberty, under a constitution comprising the wisdom of ages, and the envy of the World—a rock which has successively braved the summer's thunders and the winter's storms,—when they refuse their country's service in the hour of national embarrassment" (*Bridport Papers*, pp. 108, 109).

2. "Whilst Landsmen wander" (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 2).

In days of yore, when rich and poor agreed,
Poor served the rich and rich the poor relieved.
No despotic tyrants then the womb produced,
But, mutual all, each loved and none abused.
But now how dreadful is the scene reversed :
We're blest with birth, but with oppression cursed.[1]

From these examples of the seamen's writing and opinions it is clear that certain men, both in the Channel fleet and at the Nore, had learnt something of the political theories which had inspired the French Revolution, and had applied those theories to their own case. The actions of these mutineers were in keeping with their thoughts. In both mutinies there was evidence of hostile feeling against the existing government. It is significant that some of the earliest petitions from Spithead were addressed to Fox.[2] In the outbreak at St. Helens and throughout the Nore mutiny it was evident that the delegates regarded the ministers as enemies. Their petition to the King, which was taken ashore by Lord Northesk on 6 June, is largely a polemic against the government;[3] and their aversion was unmistakably shown on the next day, when effigies of Pitt and Dundas were hung at the yard-arm and riddled with shot.[4]

In the organization of the mutinies there is a further suggestion of the presence of revolutionary ideas in the fleet; for the system of government by committees, the imposition of an oath, and the official use of the word "brothers," all seem to have been copied from the customs of the secret societies to which many of the

1. "The Muse's friendly aid" (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 35). Perhaps it is not too fanciful to trace in the last line an echo of the opening sentence of the "Contrat Social."

2. Crew of the *Queen Charlotte* to the *London*, in answer to a letter from the *London*, dated 26 February. Enclosed with Bridport's dispatch, A.S.I. 107, J 207, 17 April.

3. *E.g.*: "We are sorry to have reason to remark, the conduct of your present ministers seems to be directed to the ruin and overthrow of your Kingdoms . . . We shall trust to your Majesty's prudence in chuseing such councillors and advisers in the present as in other affairs as will have the good of their country in view, and not, like the present ministers, its destruction" (Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 1).

4. See above, p. 189.

seamen belonged. But the clearest proof of a conscious and deliberate political intention appears in the proposal brought before the committee of the *Champion* towards the end of the Nore mutiny, "to go to the Humber and make prizes, then sail to the Texel, then petition the French Convention for protection, as the only government that understands the rights of man." [1]

These examples are only a few of the more direct indications of political feeling in the navy; but on almost every page of the seamen's writings there are signs of a buoyant spirit, of a sense of discovery, and a consciousness of new dignity and importance. In view of these facts the conclusion is irresistible that the generality of the seamen believed that the fair treatment and liberty, which were their rights, were withheld from them; and that some members of the various fleets, in demanding better treatment and greater liberty, were inspired by definitely political motives. Moreover, the fact should be emphasized that this conclusion applies to the seamen in the Channel fleet as well as to those at the Nore.

It has been commonly supposed that the Spithead mutiny was free from any political complication.[2] Even Graham, who had been sent to Portsmouth to examine the secret working of the mutiny, said that "nothing like want of loyalty to the King or attachment to the government could be traced in the business." [3] And the delegates at the Nore, by their displays of loyalty on Restoration Day and the King's birthday, and by their

1. Papers of the *Inflexible*, no. 58 (A.S.M. 137). Presumably the resolutions were sent to the *Inflexible* for the approval of the committee, and it cannot be doubted that they were well received by that company of violent mutineers. The resolutions do not appear in the papers of the *Champion*. They were not adopted by the committee of the *Champion*; but apparently they had been passed by the central committee. See above, p. 222.

2. *E.g.*, Bright (*History of England*, vol. iii, p. 1195) describes the mutiny as "wholly unpolitical."

3. Graham to King, 22 May, A.S.I. 4172. Cf. Graham's letter of 11 May: "There is not a man in the fleet whose attachment to the King need be doubted, or who would not rejoice in an opportunity of meeting and fighting the enemy."

persistent denials of any connexion with "Jacobins or persons of that Discription," succeeded in spreading the idea that their rising, however violent and mischievous it might be, at least was not contaminated with motives of sedition.[1] But when it is remembered that at the time of the Spithead mutiny there was a definite appearance of sedition on the *Mars*, and that in the two years that followed the mutinies periodic attempts were made to take other ships into French harbours, it is impossible to believe that the seamen of the Channel fleet were wholly free from political disaffection; and the resolutions sent to the *Champion* and the *Inflexible* dispose at once of the suggestion that there was no sedition among the delegates at the Nore.

The importance of the new political opinions as an underlying cause of the Mutinies was recognized by thoughtful observers at the time. In the *Annual Register* it is said that the discontent due to ill-treatment was kindled into an open flame "by the contagion of a general spirit of inquiry into rights, natural and conventional"; and that the mutinies might be "without hesitation, ascribed to the popular maxims, prevailing everywhere, of the right, inherent in all men, to require an equitable treatment, and, if denied them, to obtain it by force, if other means appeared insufficient."[2]

Thomas Grenville, whose opinion may be taken as representing the views of well-informed people on shore—at least of the friends of the government—said at the height of the second Spithead mutiny: "I cannot help fearing the evil is . . . deeply rooted in the influence of

1. *E.g.*, *Cunningham* wrote in regard to the demonstration on Restoration Day: "It may serve as one additional proof that the spirit of disaffection had not supplanted the general feeling of patriotism throughout the fleet, and whatever treasonable insubjection might have been imbibed against the constituted authorities of the Kingdom, they never harboured any serious intention of transferring their allegiance to a foreign power." In most accounts of the Mutinies the views of the majority of seamen, who were loyal, have been confused with those of the disaffected minority.

2. *Ann. Reg.*, pp. 208, 209.

Jacobin emissaries and the Corresponding Society." And he added, two days later: "I am more and more convinced that Jacobin management and influence is at the bottom of this evil." [1]

The agent of the Admiralty who collected the papers of the *Inflexible* and the *Champion*, wrote, in regard to the resolution to apply to the French government for protection: "It appears that the source of the whole mutiny and rebellion had arisen in the diffusion of the revolutionary principles of that nation."[2] And these conclusions were borne out to a large extent by the report of a committee of the House of Commons, which was appointed to investigate the work of the secret political societies. The members of the committee were, not unnaturally, inclined to attach too much importance to the political aspect of the Mutinies, since it was their business to bring every trace of sedition to light; and in the whole of their report there is shown a tendency to argue from the particular to the universal. They were undoubtedly rather panic-stricken at the amount of sedition which their work had disclosed. Nevertheless, the observations on the Mutinies contained in this report are of such interest that they must be quoted at length:

> The mutiny which took place in the fleet, if considered in all its circumstances, will be traced to an intimate connexion with the principles and practices described by Your Committee, and furnishes the most alarming proof of the efficacy of those plans of secrecy and concert, so often referred to, and of the facility with which they are applied for inflaming and heightening discontent (from whatever cause it proceeds), and for converting what might otherwise produce only a hasty and inconsiderate breach of subordination and discipline, into the most settled and systematic treason and rebellion. These principles and this concert could alone have produced the wide

1. *Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 380, 381: Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 9 and 11 May, 1797. Grenville believed that the French Jacobins were at the back of the mutiny. The belief was natural in such a time of alarm and suspicion, but it discounts to some extent the value of the opinion quoted above.

2. Observations on the papers of the *Inflexible* (A.S.M. 137).

extent of the mutiny, and the uniformity of its operation in so many and such distant quarters. The persons principally engaged in it, even in its early stages, were United Irishmen. The mutineers were bound by secret oaths to the perpetration of the greatest crimes. An attempt was made to give to the ships in mutiny the name of "The Floating Republic," and this attempt was countenanced both by papers published in France, and by a paper here, called the "Courier," which has on many occasions appeared almost equally devoted to the French cause. In some instances a disposition was manifested to direct the efforts of the mutineers to the object of compelling the government of this country to conclude a peace with the foreign enemy; and they at length even meditated betraying the ships of his Majesty into the hands of that enemy. All these circumstances combine to impress Your Committee with a firm persuasion that whatever were the pretences and misrepresentations employed to seduce from their duty a brave and loyal body of men; yet a spirit, in itself so repugnant to the habits and dispositions of British sailors, must have had its origin in those principles of foreign growth, which the Societies of the conspirators have industriously introduced into this country, and which they have incessantly laboured to disseminate among all descriptions of men; but especially among those whose fidelity and steadiness is most important to the public safety.[1]

In view of all the evidence that has been given it must be admitted that the designs of some of the mutineers were treasonous, and that the principles of the French Revolution had been at work, both at Spithead and at the Nore. Nevertheless, there is not the least reason for believing that these principles had directly influenced more than a small minority of the seamen. The loyalty of the mutineers as a whole is unquestionable. Although the protestations of devotion to the King and the constitution were not always made in good faith, the actions of the majority of mutineers leave no room for doubt. There was nothing seditious in the moderation of the delegates and most of the seamen at Spithead; and it has been

1. *House of Commons Reports*, vol. x, pp. 789 *seqq.* The report was published on 15 March 1799.

shown that the Nore mutiny failed largely because the majority of the seamen were unwilling to continue a revolt which was clearly hostile to the wishes of the nation. It would be useless to labour any further a statement that is already established. No one has ever doubted the fidelity of most of the men concerned in the Mutinies. They were commonly described at the time as "the misguided seamen," but stronger terms of reproach were hardly ever applied to them.

It is now possible to reconstruct to some extent the method by which the Mutinies were brought about. The great mass of the seamen were as honest and sober-minded, and as little inclined to rebel as any of the men who had served in the navy before them. It is obvious that such men would not form a widespread and dangerous conspiracy on their own initiative. In addition to these reliable seamen there was a certain proportion of those who were by nature of an unruly spirit. But men of this character are usually opportunists rather than plotters; although they would welcome a chance of escaping for a time from the restrictions of naval discipline, they would be very little more disposed than the others to invent and organize the mutiny of a whole fleet. And even if they were to make the attempt, they would not easily persuade seamen of the ordinary type to submit to their guidance.

But there was in the navy a third class of men, whose receptive minds had learnt, and readily adopted, those exalted ideas of natural rights which have been illustrated in the preceding pages. These men could see clearly the vast difference between their ideal of liberty and the actual state of hardship, poverty and irritating restraint in which they were forced to live; and the sufferings which had commonly been regarded as the necessary heritage of the seamen appeared to them to be political evils, the outcome of a system of tyranny. They were men who had a definite principle to maintain, and were

contending for an object which could only be gained by revolution. Although the statement cannot be supported by absolute proof, there can be little doubt that the real authors of the mutiny were men of this character.

It is not hard to reconcile the political motives of these malcontents with the undoubted loyalty of most of the mutineers. In all probability there was not a single seaman in the navy who was thoroughly contented with the conditions of his life. Even the most loyal seamen must have submitted with a grumbling acquiescence to the unfavourable terms of their service. They had enlisted either under compulsion or to avoid a worse fate; and they endured the hardships of their life at sea because there was no means of escape open to them except the dangerous expedient of desertion. They were clearly in a condition to welcome the suggestion that their sufferings were a grievance and an injustice, which might be remedied by combined action.

Such a view did not necessarily imply any feeling of disloyalty. The seaman understood vaguely that he was being treated unfairly, and that by joining with his fellows in demanding a redress of their grievances, he was serving the cause of reform. But in his mind "reform" meant simply an increase of wages and prize-money, an improvement in his provisions, better treatment on the part of the officers, and leave to go ashore. His "rights" were those material benefits which seemed to him to be a proper return for his services: his idea of justice was based on an innate sense of fair play, not on a theory of the Laws of Nature and the Rights of Man. These simple and practical opinions are reflected in the statement of John Fleming, the honest delegate of the *London*, that he was as "unanimous" as any of the mutineers in demanding a redress of their grievances, but would not assume authority over the officers;[1] in the

1. Letter of John Fleming to the delegates, quoted in the *Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*, by Admiral E. G. Colpoys.

vague complaint from the *Repulse* that their "grievance" had been of too long standing;[1] and in the words of Henry Long, of the *Champion*, " Give us our due, and no more of it, till we go in search of those rascals, the enemies of our country." [2] Such opinions were held by the majority of the seamen; and the object that was most commonly desired by the mutineers is expressed with fairness, though with some confusion of metaphors in the couplet:

> Their gallant hearts the chains of bondage broke,
> Not to revolt, but to evade the yoke.[3]

But before the unimaginative and loyal seamen could be disposed to rebel, they must have been instructed and persuaded by men of a different character. The instruction, indeed, would seldom be direct; for the ordinary, loyal sailor would not readily allow his opinion to be dictated by a landsman. We may suspect that the opinion of the fleet was formed more subtly, by gradual influence, and the statement of practical grievances—which were obvious and were felt by everybody—and by discussion of the means of redress. And it has been shown that the men who were the best fitted to contrive the mutiny and to incite the others to join their conspiracy, were those who had adopted the political theories of the Revolution. They could realize the disparity between the ideal of free citizenship and the actual state of bondage to which the seamen were reduced; and they alone could supply the principle which would give coherence and direction to the general feeling of discontent. Without their guidance the forces of revolt might have been dissipated in vain murmurings and useless chafing against restraint.

The method by which the Mutinies were planned and organized can never be exactly known, but it may be

1. Papers of the *Repulse*, no. 5.
2. *Ibid.*, no. 29.
3. *Ibid.*, no. 35.

conjectured that the idea of a mutiny was introduced into the fleet by men of a seditious character, who worked deliberately to spread the disaffection among their fellow-seamen. Their motives will be discussed later: for the present it is enough to say that for several months persistent efforts had been made to bring about a general mutiny. It was ascertained that a revolt had been planned by United Irishmen, a year before the actual outbreak.[1] In 1796 Wolfe Tone issued a proclamation inviting the Irishmen in the fleet to rise in rebellion.[2] And Bridport was informed that a mutiny in his squadron had been attempted in December.[3] But the agitation, in so far as its object was political, only met with partial success.[4] The fomenters of the mutiny were able to arouse discontent among the seamen, but they did not spread sedition. The effect which their arguments produced in the minds of the seamen is suggested by the events that led up to the Mutinies. It seems that as early as December 1796 there was a general desire in the Channel fleet for a redress of grievances. But although the idea of a mutiny must have been familiar at that time to most of the members of the fleet, they were unwilling to adopt such a violent measure until they had tried to secure redress by means of petitions to the Admiralty. It was only when two sets of petitions had been written, and had been disregarded by the authorities, that the

1. Cooke to Greville, 21 June, A.S.I. 4172.

2. *Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 326–328. The proclamation is quoted below, pp. 331—332. The date is not certain, but there is reason for believing that it was 1796.

3. Bridport to Nepean, 17 April, A.S.I. 107, J 207.

4. Graham in his letter of 22 May (A.S.I. 4172) gave an interesting commentary on this want of success: "I am persuaded from the conversation I have had with so many of the sailors that if any man upon earth had dared openly to avow his intentions of using them as instruments to distress the country, his life would have paid the forfeit." Graham's visit to Portsmouth lasted about a fortnight. During that time he had frequent interviews with the seamen, on shore and in boats in the harbour. He made particular efforts to win the confidence of Valentine Joyce. But the seamen were too loyal or too cautious to afford him any evidence of a political intention in the mutiny. Joyce could probably have done so if he had had the inclination.

seamen at length agreed to enforce their demands by refusing to weigh anchor.

The conclusion, then, in regard to the presence of revolutionary ideas in the various fleets is that they were only held by a small proportion of the seamen; but that they were of importance as a cause of the Mutinies, since they served as a principle and incentive to many of the men who were chiefly responsible for the outbreak. The seamen as a whole knew little or nothing of the theories of the rights of man, and it is certain that they were not consciously actuated by political motives. Nevertheless, it seems that they were indirectly affected by those theories, and that their desire for greater liberty and better treatment was in its origin an outcome of the revolutionary movement.[1]

1. In this discussion I have treated sedition and the belief in revolutionary theories as synonymous terms, and I think that they may properly be used in this way. In 1789 a feeling of sympathy with the French reformers might imply nothing more than a philanthropic mind, or an honest faith in constitutional democracy. But at the time of the mutinies the conditions were different. The dangers of the principles which had been laid down in the Declaration of the Rights of Man had been proved by the events of the Revolution, and this country was at war against those principles. Moreover several of the political societies, which were the chief organs of the revolutionary movement in the British Isles, had become definitely seditious. The fact that they did not succeed in overthrowing the constitution is explained not by lack of inclination, but by lack of ability. Many of the mutineers belonged to these societies, and it seems reasonable to impute some measure of sedition to most, if not all, of the seamen who had adopted the revolutionary theories.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Authors of the Mutinies.

It has been shown that seditious opinions existed in the mutinous fleets, and that in all probability the men who held these opinions were the originators and the strongest supporters of the plan of revolt. Some attention may now be given to the character and quality of these persons, who may be regarded as the authors of the Mutinies.

At the end of the eighteenth century the navy contained an unusual number of quota-men—volunteers who had been recruited by the civil authorities. By no means all of them were seamen by trade. Many of them were dwellers on shore who had become destitute through bankruptcy or unemployment, and had been attracted to the navy by the high bounties, the certainty of regular work, and the chance of earning prize-money. Others had come under the power of the law. The French war had involved a great increase in the naval establishment, and it was difficult, even with the help of the press gangs, to maintain the crews at their full strength. The recruiting officers could not afford to make a careful choice of the men whose services they accepted. Therefore, as the gaols were full, it was to the common advantage of the legal and naval authorities that the more reputable sort of prisoners should be dismissed into the tenders. Those who entered the navy in this way were, as a rule, either debtors or men who had been convicted of petty fraud.[1]

1. "Disqualified attorneys, and cashiered excisemen, clerks dismissed from employment, and other individuals in similar cases" (*Ann. Reg.*, p. 208).

But by whatever inducement or misadventure the quota-men had been drawn into the naval service, they were generally persons of comparatively good education who had been used to happier conditions of life than those which awaited them in their new capacity of seamen; and the hardships of a naval career would seem much more irksome to such men than they would to the experienced seaman, who from his youth had been familiar with danger and discomfort. Hence it may be supposed that the quota-men, as a whole, were more discontented than those who were seamen by trade. And the Mutinies might be attributed to the presence in the fleet of a large number of quota-men, whose discontent had swelled beyond endurance. But such an explanation does not seem to meet all the circumstances of the Mutinies. It might account for "a hasty and ill-considered breach of subordination and discipline"; yet it is hard to believe that this body of men, if they were loyally minded, and were stirred by no other motives than unhappiness and irritation, would plan and organize a revolt which must involve serious danger to the whole country. The importance of the quota-men as agents in the Mutinies seems rather to lie in the fact that many of them had included in their education a slight and mischievous knowledge of the new political theories. With this knowledge, and with the natural feeling of resentment against the rough manner of life and the unfamiliar restraint, the quota-men would be perfectly equipped for the work of spreading disaffection and contriving a mutiny.[1] And it is probable that several

1. Cf. *Cunningham*, p. 135: "This resource introduced a new class of persons into the Service, whose minds were infected with the prevailing sentiments of the times, and whose pursuits and habits were consequently by no means congenial to the good order and general peaceableness of the seamen who had been brought up in the profession, when confined to their duty." *James* (vol. ii, p. 65) gives a vivid description of the quota-man of this type, based, I imagine, on first-hand knowledge.

of the ringleaders at Spithead and at the Nore had been sent into the navy by the civil authorities.[1]

Most of the quota-men had been brought to their unhappy condition through misfortune or crime. But it appears that there were others who had volunteered for service with the deliberate intention of provoking a revolt in the fleet, or at least, of stirring up disaffection among the seamen. During the first mutiny at Spithead it was said in the *Times* that "secret enemies" of the government had found means of entering the fleet.[2] And a rumour was published in the *Annual Register* that "many persons had entered on board the ships, as common seamen, completely qualified to breed disturbances, by acting in that station, and selected, for that very purpose, by the enemies of the government."[3]

It has been said already that the ordinary seamen, in all probability, were not the prime movers of the revolt. The revolutions in America and France and the rebellion in Ireland were led by men of good education and great mental ability. The French and Irish peasants, although they rose at the instigation of their leaders, were too ignorant and simple-minded to rebel on their own initiative. Almost certainly the case of the seamen was similar: the Mutinies were of alien growth, and the seed of disaffection was sown by seditious men. The majority of the seamen only joined the mutiny because they had been persuaded by men who had won their confidence, that the government was dealing unjustly with them. We may conclude then that many of the leading mutineers were either quota-men who had adopted revolutionary opinions, or volunteers who had purposely

1. It may be remarked that Valentine Joyce and Richard Parker had entered the navy as quota-men. Joyce had been imprisoned for seditious practices, and Parker for debt.

2. 21 April. Three days before, a writer in the *Times* had said: "We have great pleasure in observing that there is no reason to suspect the smallest disaffection in anyone to his Majesty's service and Government."

3. P. 208.

enlisted to encourage and direct the discontent that was known to exist in the navy. These men probably composed a large part of "the lawless set" at the Nore, "who too fatally ruled and overawed hundreds" of seamen of a loyal disposition.[1] And it is likely that the mutineers who at various times tried to take their ships into French harbours, belonged to the one or the other of these two classes.

Such were, in general, the men who in all probability began the mutinous movement. But their connexion with the rising is not shown by indirect evidence only. From scattered allusions in the documents relating to the Mutinies it is possible to gain a more exact knowledge of a few of the ringleaders. A characteristic example of the dangerous type of volunteers is found in Evans, the "pettyfogging attorney," who acted, under an assumed name, as a delegate at Spithead.[2] Another attorney serving in the Channel fleet was Lee, a United Irishman, who was believed to have enlisted with the object of spreading sedition, and was hanged for complicity in the mutiny at Plymouth.[3]

An interesting case of a degenerate scholar was reported in evidence supplied from the Home Office. An elderly man named Bowstead, who was serving on the *Belliqueux* during the Nore mutiny, was found to be very well educated: he himself said that "he could speak the dead languages as well as any man." He was evidently a prominent mutineer at the Nore, and it was supposed that he had been a ringleader in the earlier mutiny on the *Culloden*.[4] Charles Hawkins, an Irish seaman of the Nore fleet, had been a strolling actor; but he had ruined

1. Petition from four men of the *Grampus* imprisoned at Chelmsford (A.S.I. 5125, 9 June).

2. See above, p. 78.

3. Plymouth Comt., 27 May (Digest). See also Fitzgerald, *Secret Service under Pitt*, p. 113. Lee was a private of marines at the time of the mutiny.

4. A.S.I. 4172, 28 June.

himself by dissipation, and at length had enlisted in Edinburgh as a quota-man.[1] Richard Parker himself had been a naval officer and a schoolmaster.

These are all examples of men who had lived in comparative comfort and freedom on shore, and had sunk to the station of common seamen. There are other instances of sedition among mutineers whose earlier history is unknown. Richard Layton, of the *Ramillies*, in the Channel fleet, was reported to be in league with revolutionaries in France.[2] When the imprisoned mutineers were released after the battle of Camperdown, Duncan was warned that a man named Edward Brown, who was returning to his squadron, was of a dangerous character. It was said that he had volunteered, as Lee and Evans had done, with the direct purpose of spreading disaffection.[3]

A few weeks after the collapse of the Nore mutiny information reached the Admiralty of a conspiracy on the *Gorgon* frigate, to raise a new mutiny and hang two of the lieutenants. John Slack, the steward of the *Gorgon*, who was evidently privy to the plot, and was responsible for spreading the rumour, was a member of the Corresponding Society. John Hagan, of the *Ramillies*, apparently a member of the same society, when he first went on board, had taken with him a large supply of inflammatory political pamphlets.[4] In October, 1798, two men of the *Diomede* were tried by court-martial for attempting to stir up a mutiny. One of the prisoners, who was named Tomms, was found to be connected with the Nottingham branch of the Corresponding Society. He was supplied with news of the Society by a brother who lived in Nottingham.[5] Daniel Price, of the

1. Captain Brenton to Nepean, 15 June, A.S.I. 1517. Brenton's letter was probably written in answer to inquiries from the Nore.
2. Pro. A 19b, 4 July (Digest).
3. Minutes 122 (Digest).
4. Pro. W 259, 5 July (Digest).
5. Report of Secret Committee on Seditious Societies, u.s.

Inflexible, had in his pocket-book a "coarse print" of Fox, and a cutting from a newspaper published in Dublin in January, 1797. This article was entitled, "Political Dictionary for 1797.—Reasons for not making peace, by the Right Honourable ——." The blank was, of course, to be supplied by the name of Pitt, and the whole article was "intended to inflame the minds of the people against H.M. Councils, and to serve the purposes of opposition in endeavouring to supplant them." [1]

George Shave, a delegate of the *Leopard*, although he may not have been a member of any secret society, certainly regarded the mutiny as a political instrument. He said that "the country had been oppressed for these five years; the war had been too long; and now was the time to get themselves righted." [2]

Charles MacCarthy, the mutineer-captain of the *Pylades* at the Nore, who was probably a United Irishman, composed several violent addresses. He was described by the captain of the ship as "either the first or one of the first beginners of the mutiny in this fleet." [3] In the early days of the mutiny he was chosen to lead the deputation to Spithead. It was possibly as a punishment for his failure in this mission that he was sent away from the *Sandwich* to the *Pylades*. But, if his removal was intended to be a punishment, the rebuff does not seem to have checked his enthusiasm; for his conduct on the *Pylades* was most violent, and it was probably owing to his influence over the crew that the ship was not surren-

1. A.S.M. 137.

2. Evidence of Captain Hargood at the trial of mutineers of the *Leopard*, A.S.I. 5486. For Shave's opinion of the project of escape to sea, see above, p. 224

3. Captain Mackenzie to Buckner, 18 June, enclosed with C 397, A.S.I. 727. See also evidence of Lieutenant Flatt and several other witnesses, before the magistrates, 17 June, A.S.I. 3685; and evidence at MacCarthy's trial, A.S.I. 5486. The evidence all tends to confirm Captain Mackenzie's opinion.

dered when the *Clyde* and the *San Fiorenzo* made their escape.[1]

Thomas Jephson, of the *Sandwich*, almost certainly belonged to the United Irish Society. He had "brought on board with him a paper printed in Belfast, addressed to the people of Ireland, purporting to sow the seeds of sedition and discontent against the government; which he show'd to several of the people. And he was heard to say that if the people of England had an equal spirit with those of Ireland, their wrongs would long since have been redress'd." [2] Jephson played the violin in the band which attended the delegates, but it was said that he objected to playing "God Save the King." He encouraged the delegates to go to Ireland, saying that the Irish people were in arms against the government, and would supply the fleet with beef and water. It was rumoured that a stranger from London had visited him during the mutiny; and the rumour is confirmed by the evidence of Charles Walker, a watchmaker of Coleman Place, St. Luke's. Walker said that Jephson had had dealings with Connolly, a bootmaker, who gave him letters and old newspapers. Connolly was known to the landlord of a neighbouring public house, but the landlord refused to say where Connolly lived. This evidence seems to show by what means the paper from Belfast had come into Jephson's possession. And we may suppose that Connolly was one of the obscure mischief-makers who encouraged the rising and tried to make political gain from the discontent.[3]

1. MacCarthy tried to prove that he was sent to the *Pylades* as a punishment. The same line of defence was used by MacCann to explain his position on the *Director*. But such a charge seems an extraordinary form of punishment. And in MacCarthy's case the evidence shows that whereas he returned from Portsmouth near the beginning of the mutiny, he was sent to the *Pylades* comparatively near the end—probably at the time when it was feared that the ship would escape.

2. Buckner to Nepean, A.S.I. 727, C 393.

3. Evidence of Hewson, Watson and Walker at the court-martial. Hewson was a bad witness, who contradicted his own statements, and must have come near to punishment for perjury. But a large part of

Another mutineer of the Sandwich, named Chant, was even more outspoken than Jephson. He was heard several times to curse the King, and to say, "We have done with him: we want no King."[1] And Gregory, whom we have often seen in the forefront of the mutiny, said in an address to the crew of the *Sandwich* a short time before their surrender: "Is there not many among you here as fit to be our sovereign as George Rex? He has power and we have the force of gunpowder."[2]

The work of spreading sedition was not confined to seamen and petty officers. It seems to have been undertaken as well by some officers of higher rank, and particularly by surgeons. As they had not the authority over the seamen that was exercised by the officers of the quarter-deck, the surgeons were able, if they were so disposed, to speak familiarly and without restraint to the men who came under their care; and the extent to which a surgeon might influence the feelings of his ship's company is shown in the case of Smith, of the *London*, who was largely instrumental in saving the lives of Colpoys and Captain Griffiths. Several United Irishmen, who were qualified to act as surgeons, had apparently realized the political possibilities of service in the navy. It was reported by Cooke, the Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, that Irish surgeons and mates had done great mischief in the mutinous fleets. A week after the end of the Nore mutiny it was found that two surgeons of Belfast, both notorious United Irishmen, were trying to find appointments in the navy, and had invited another man of the same class to join them[3] MacMurdy, a surgeon in the Channel fleet, was believed to have been an active agent in the Spithead mutiny. It was known

1. Evidence of Jacob Swanston, gunner of the *Sandwich*.
2. Evidence of Henry Dobson, captain's clerk of the *Sandwich*.
3. Cooke to Greville, 21 June, A.S.I. 4172.

his evidence is confirmed by the other two witnesses. The proofs were not strong enough to convict Jephson of open sedition, and as he was not a ringleader in the mutiny he escaped with a severe flogging.

that he had questionable correspondents in Belfast.[1] And it is interesting to notice that in the hospital at Haslar, a short time before the mutiny, there had been an assistant surgeon named Dean, who was commonly called "Citizen Dean," on account of his democratic opinions.[2]

These are types of the men who were the best qualified to provoke and organize the Mutinies: men of good education, who had spent most of their lives on shore, men who were unused to the roughness and privation of naval life, and, in many cases, revolutionaries anxious to spread their political creed among seamen, who were too loyal to be led into open rebellion, but too ignorant to question the arguments of their instructors. The difference in character between the Mutinies at Spithead and the Nore is probably due to the suppression of these violent men in the Channel fleet, by delegates of a sober judgement and a loyal disposition, and their comparatively strong influence in the Nore fleet, which lasted until the loyal majority rose in a body against them, and put an end to the mutiny.[3]

1. Cooke to Greville, 10 June.
2. Graham to King, *ibid.*, 22 May.
3. By emphasizing the importance of the quota-men and other landsmen as authors of the mutiny, I do not mean to imply that the landsmen were all disaffected, or that the seamen were all loyal. It cannot be doubted that many professional seamen were of such an unruly or impressionable character that they would readily accept the suggestion of a mutiny, and the principle of the rights of man on which the mutiny seems to have been based. But they had probably derived their opinions from landsmen or from books and pamphlets supplied by persons on shore. The landsmen had had greater opportunities of imbibing sedition, and it is likely that a larger proportion of them were disaffected. It may be remarked here that in this discussion the word *seamen* may be taken as meaning *seamen and marines*. The marines as a whole were not so strongly disposed to mutiny as the seamen were, because they were not subject to the same grievances, but they had a considerable share in both the mutinies and on most occasions acted with the seamen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Political Societies and the Seamen.

Many of the seamen whose names are included in the foregoing list were members of the secret political societies, which had been founded in order to spread in the British Isles the principles of the French Revolution, or had adopted these principles since their foundation. It is natural, therefore, to inquire whether these societies had been at work in the navy as well as on shore, and whether the Mutinies were in any sense the result of deliberate designs on the part of the revolutionary leaders. These two questions must be considered before a conclusive opinion can be given in regard to the causes of the Mutinies.

For the purpose of this discussion, the most important political clubs were the Corresponding Society, and the Societies of United Irishmen and United Britons. But there were many other organizations, such as the Friends of Parliamentary Reform,[1] and the Constitutional and Revolution Societies,[2] which helped to spread the new political ideas in this country. In the early years of the French Revolution the members of the political societies had openly supported the measures of the republicans in France, but the trials of Horne Tooke, Hardy and several other democrats, and the repressive Acts of 1794 and

1. An interesting account of this society is given in the *Moniteur*, 3 June, 1797. According to the London correspondent, who, as a republican, would probably have the confidence of the members, their toasts included : "Prompt peace and alliance with the French Republic; the patriots imprisoned in the Bastille of Ireland; the anniversary of liberty; the Corresponding Society."

2. The two societies that were attacked by Burke in the *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

1796[1] had given them reason to move with greater caution. They began to do their work "silently and secretly." The affairs of the societies were conducted by means of an elaborate system of committees;[2] but the secrets of their working, in some instances, were so closely guarded that the identity of the leaders was hidden, even from members of the society. Orders were issued by the central committee, but no one, unless he were actually a member of the committee, knew who were the authors of the instructions.[3] Nevertheless, in spite of this secrecy, it was generally known that the object of the Corresponding Society was to set up a republic in England, with the help of French troops.[4] Moreover, several of the leading United Irishmen, who in the first instance were merely supporters of parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, had developed republican ideas. They had received open, though unavailing, support from France in the expedition to Bantry Bay—four months before the Mutinies—and they had sent several agents to the Continent to arrange fresh invasions of Great Britain or Ireland.[5] The Society of United Britons was founded in Manchester at the beginning of 1797, in imitation of the United Irish Society. Its sphere of influence was chiefly

1. May, 1794, Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act (Act to empower his Majesty to secure and detain all such Persons as his Majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his Person and Government); January, 1796, Acts for the better Prevention of Treason and Sedition, and the Protection of his Majesty's Person.

2. *E.g.*, the United Irishmen were governed by committees of four kinds: baronial, county, provincial and national. Each committee sent deputies to the committee next above it in rank, and by this means the central body was able to keep in touch with the local organizations (see Pelham's Report, *Ann. Reg.*, App. to Chron., p. 145).

3. This system was adopted by the United Britons. See Report of Secret Committee, *House of Commons Reports*, vol. x, pp. 796, 797.

4. *Ibid.*

5. The chief agents were Wolfe Tone and Lewins in France, and Duckett in Hamburg. Lewins and Tone were both attorneys. It is remarkable that in the American and French revolutions, in the Irish rebellion, and also in the Mutinies, several of the leading agitators were lawyers. Presumably their reading of the theoretical parts of law, at a time when jurisprudence was by no means a scientific study, had disposed them to adopt the new theories of the origin of society and the rights of man.

in the North of England and in Scotland. At that time, as in the present day, there was a large Irish population in Lancashire, and United Irishmen formed a considerable part of this population. They strongly supported the new society, and probably added to its numerical strength. It appears that the same men were often members of more than one political club, and that the executive bodies of the different societies were in close communication one with another, with the object of raising a general revolt throughout the British Isles.[1]

Such, in brief, was the character of the political societies to which many of the seamen belonged; and it can readily be understood that members of these bodies who were serving in the navy would be anxious to make allies of their fellow-seamen. The leaders of the revolutionary movement knew the importance of the army and navy, either as friends or as enemies. The two chief obstacles to the advance of democracy in this country were the war with France, and the tenure of office by a Tory ministry. If only the ministry could be overthrown, and replaced by a government pledged to make peace with France, the gain to the democratic party would be incalculable. But as long as the existing government was supported by the Crown and by the defensive forces of the country, it was secure in office, and the principles of the Revolution could make no substantial headway. Efforts were being made to rouse the whole nation against the government; and it was clearly a matter of the utmost importance to the republican leaders to detach the army and the navy from the side of authority and to convert them to the principles of democracy.

There is no doubt that emissaries of the political societies had been working to attain these ends. The

1. *E.g.*, Jephson, of the *Sandwich*, apparently belonged to the United Irish and Corresponding Societies; certainly Arthur O'Connor and Father O'Coigly belonged to both. And the two societies were leagued together to carry out a surprise attack on London (see Report of the Secret Committee, p. 799).

Secret Committee of the House of Commons found that systematic attempts had been made "to seduce both the sailors and soldiers from their allegiance, to incite them to mutiny, and to engage them in plans for the subversion of government";[1] and Graham wrote a week after the end of the St. Helens mutiny that he had almost certain proof of "some evil-minded persons having actually been at Portsmouth for the purpose of tampering with the seamen."[2] The work was done partly by such agents on shore, and partly by those who had enlisted in order to spread sedition,[3] and in a considerable measure by means of the pamphlets and handbills that were distributed among the soldiers and sailors. Very little direct evidence of the work can be discovered, because it was carried on in secret; and the seditious papers were either carefully concealed, or were destroyed as soon as they had been read.[4] No one was ever convicted of attempts to spread sedition in the navy; and Graham, although he was convinced that books and handbills had been circulated in the Channel fleet, had to confess: "What astonishes me is that neither the magistrates nor any of the officers of the fleet are able to procure me a single copy of either."[5] Graham's opinion was generally shared by all those who were responsible for the suppres-

1. Report, p. 794. For a discussion of the value of this evidence, see above, p. 308.

2. Graham to King, 22 May, A.S.I. 4172.

3. These men must have expected either that their friends would pay for their release from the navy as soon as their work was done, or that their ships would soon be put out of commission, on the signature of a peace with France.

4. Cf. *Cunningham* (p. viii): "That so much, however, should be wanting to elucidate the secret history of this mutiny, is not surprising, when we consider that no sooner had the links that connected the chain of infamy given way, than those who were parties to the coalition destroyed every written record of their transactions." Sir Peter Parker had information that a party of Irish recruits who were coming to Portsmouth on the *Brothers* tender, were bringing with them a number of inflammatory papers, "but notwithstanding the most exact scrutiny, no papers were found of the description above mentioned" (Parker to Nepean, 8 June, A.S.I. 1022, A 539).

5. Graham to King, 11 May.

sion of the Mutinies; but the failure to find any concrete evidence of the treasonable work was almost universal, and at the present time there are hardly any examples to be found of the revolutionary literature that was known to be in use among the seamen.[1]

Nevertheless, some slight records still exist of a movement that must in reality have been very considerable and widespread. Graham believed that the "secret enemies" on shore had used the slopsellers as their agents; and at last he obtained evidence from a cordwainer of Portsea, that a slopseller named Charles Brassett had taken a number of books to Spithead in the middle of April, and had distributed them among the seamen of the *Ramillies*.[2] It may be remembered that Hagan, of the same ship, was believed to have taken seditious pamphlets on board.[3] Cunningham said there could be little doubt "that the conspiracy was encouraged and kept alive by some parties in secret, who must have prepared the inflammatory handbills which were circulated, and who contrived to escape detection"; and he added that the handbills were distributed throughout the fleet.[4]

These few instances, though they are vague and unsatisfactory, may serve to establish the fact that revolutionary propaganda had been undertaken in the navy; but they give no information in regard to the organizations by which the work was directed. Something more

1. I have not seen any of these pamphlets and handbills. But there is a mention in the Digest (Plymouth Comt., 29 May) of seditious papers, which may still be in existence. And it is possible that some may be found among the captains' letters.

2. 11 May, A.S.I. 4172. Shapland, the cordwainer, was an eyewitness of Brassett's work in the fleet.

3. See above, p. 319.

4. *Cunningham*, p. 96. The discontent on the *Mars* before the second mutiny at Spithead (see above, p. 53) must have been due, in part at least, to the papers that were taken on board. According to a letter from Portsmouth published in the *Times* (13 May), men of the *Duke* and the *Mars* had been carrying on a secret correspondence with traitorous people on shore; and the crew of the *Mars* had led the other crews to distrust the government.

definite, however, may be said of this matter. The Committee of the House of Commons found that the United Britons had been "particularly active in the most wicked attempts to seduce the soldiers in the different regiments"; and it may be supposed that similar attempts were made by them in the navy. Little is known of any measures that may have been taken by the Corresponding Society for the seduction of the seamen. But it has been shown that there were members of the Society, both at Spithead and the Nore, who may have acted as official agents. Hagan, of the *Ramillies*, was a member, and the pamphlets in his possession may have been issued by the Corresponding Society. Two months after the Nore mutiny a seaman of the *Clyde* received a parcel of books from his brother, who was a tradesman in Somers Town. It was found that the books were published by the Corresponding Society, and that the brother had for a long time been suspected of sedition.[1]

But the most convincing evidence that secret political societies were connected with the navy appears in the work of the United Irishmen. A part of the Irish people was already openly at war against England. The United Irishmen regarded their country as an autonomous power, the ally of France and the natural enemy of the English. Such of them as had found their way into the British fleet would readily and actively adopt the suggestion of a mutiny. There would be with them no question of disloyalty, no hesitation in bringing peril to the government and people of England, no desire to come quickly to terms with the Admiralty and "go in search of those rascals the enemies" of their country. For their masters were their enemies, and every blow struck against the English government would serve to hasten the day of Irish independence.

About an eighth of the whole number of men in the

1. *Cunningham*, p. 140.

navy were Irish.[1] It is impossible to estimate what proportion of them belonged to the United Irish Society, or how many of them held republican ideas. A considerable number were simple peasants, who knew hardly anything of political affairs.[2] Those who came from Munster would not as a rule be disaffected. The Munster men were conspicuous for their loyalty, or, from the Irish point of view, for their indifference to the welfare of their country.[3] And in the Society itself there were different grades of opinion; for, although the most active members were openly or secretly republican, there were probably many others who held simply to the original principles of parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation.

Nevertheless, there must have been on most ships, at least a small group of United Irishmen, naturally of a rebellious spirit, who would form a nucleus of discontent, and would influence their fellow countrymen against the discipline of the navy and against the Tory government. But as nearly all the United Irishmen in the fleet would be only private members of the society and would have no part in directing its policy, it would not be reasonable to attribute to them the first design of the mutiny. They may have had a large share in carrying out the scheme, but it seems likely that their actions were directed by the central committee or by some of the chief agents of the Society. It is possible that many different minds

1. The number of Irishmen in the fleet in 1797 was, roughly, 11,500 sailors and 4,000 marines (see *Lecky*, vol. vii, p. 248). Fitzpatrick (*Secret Service under Pitt*, p. 113) says that Tone told Carnot that there were 80,000 Irishmen in the navy. The total strength of the navy was 100,000 seamen and 20,000 marines (including officers).

2. Cooke to Greville, 21 June, A.S.I. 4172.

3. Cf. these lines from the "Song of the Dead Insurgent," by Michael O'Longain:

"My woe on Munster's slumbers
When we rose out to fight."

(Sigurson, *Bards of the Gael and Gall*, p. 277, and Introduction, pp. 83, 84). See also *Ann. Reg.*, p. 228. The political sentiment of Munster was royalist and Jacobite, and this feeling was naturally opposed to an alliance of Irishmen with the French republicans.

independently conceived the idea of a mutiny, that several channels of discontent converged to cause the flood of rebellion. But almost certainly one source, perhaps the main source, of the mutinous spirit was in Ireland.

The first evidence of this connexion between the United Irish Society and the navy is an ardent proclamation, written by Wolfe Tone, apparently in 1796,[1] and addressed to the Irish seamen in the fleet. At that time Wolfe Tone was beginning his mission to France and the Netherlands. He was doing everything in his power to damage the authority of England and to set up an independent republic in Ireland. It was not to be expected that the freedom of Ireland could be attained without help from abroad; and as long as the British fleet remained at its full strength an invasion would be a hazardous undertaking, apart from the reverses of fortune that wrecked the expedition to Bantry Bay at the end of the year. But if only the power of the fleet could be broken by the secession of a large part of the seamen, the liberating army could land without any fear of opposition. The policy of undermining the allegiance of the army and navy was obviously the safest and most promising for the United Irishmen, and it is not surprising to find that Wolfe Tone made efforts to spread disloyalty in the fleet at the time when he was negotiating for an invasion from France.

These are the terms in which he addressed his fellow countrymen in the navy:

> I do most earnestly entreat your attention to the following observations; you will determine for yourselves whether I do not speak as well for your own honour and interest as that of your country. Ireland is now at war with England in defence of her liberties; France is the ally of Ireland, and England is the common enemy of both nations. You are aboard the British navy. You will probably be called upon immediately

1. In Tone's *Memoirs* it is included among the papers written in 1796, but it is not dated.

to turn your arms against your native land, and the part which you may take on this great occasion is of the very last importance. I hope and rely that you will act as becomes brave seamen and honest Irishmen. . . . . Remember that Ireland is now an independent nation. You are no longer the subjects of the King of England; you are at the same time a great majority of those who man his fleet, in the proportion of at least two to one. What is there to hinder you from immediately seizing on every vessel wherein you sail, man-of-war, Indiaman or merchantman, hoisting the Irish flag and steering into the ports of Ireland? You have the power, if you have but the inclination; and it will be your own fault if you are not immediately raised to a situation which in the service of the enemy you durst not even think of. Suppose you profit of this favourable moment to do what is but your duty as good Irishmen, that you seize upon the English vessels and bring them into your own harbours. In the first place every vessel so brought into port shall be sold for its full value, both ship and cargo, and the price faithfully paid you. Those of you who do not choose to go to sea again shall have an immediate discharge, and return to their families with their share of the prize money. And as the vessels will be directly put in commission again, under the Irish flag, those brave seamen who wish to serve their country and to make their fortunes at the expense of the common enemy will, of course, have the first promotion, and every man will have his chance of becoming an officer, according to his zeal, courage and talents. . . . . Now is your time, my brave countrymen, to revenge your own wrongs and those of Ireland! What is there to hinder you? You are two to one, and if you were but equal in number, I hope there is not a man of you but is as good as an Englishman. How can your officers prevent you if you are determined to do your duty to your country and yourselves? They are not one to twenty, and it will be your own folly if you allow them for a moment to stand in the way of your advancement on this great occasion. Depend upon it, they dare not stir, if they see you once resolved; you have but to make the attempt, and you must succeed.[1]

We may assume that the central committee, although they may not have given their official sanction to the

1. *Life of Wolfe Tone*, vol. ii, pp. 326–328. Tone recommended the same policy in an Address to the Irish people (*ibid.*, p. 289).

issue of this proclamation, at least approved its sentiments and its purpose. Was it then a part of their policy to stir up a revolt in the navy? They had certainly adopted this policy two years after the Mutinies, when they made an attempt to renew the discontent in the fleet by means of an address very similar to Wolfe Tone's in its sentiments and promises.[1] In this proclamation there is a reference to another, issued in the previous year, that had been intercepted by agents of the government.[2] The persistence with which the United Irishmen produced these addresses shows that they were diligent in pursuing the policy suggested in Wolfe Tone's letter. Moreover, it seems that in 1798 officials of the Society were trying to collect money on the Continent for use in a fresh mutiny.[3]

We have seen, too, that a week after the collapse of the Nore mutiny, the United Irishmen were supplying surgeons to the navy. And even at the beginning of June the Regulating Captain in Dublin found that a notorious United Irishman, named John Connolly, had been sent to Plymouth in the *Brothers* tender. The Regulating Captain had the information against Connolly too late to prevent him from sailing; but he sent a

1. Second Report of Secret Committee (1801), Appendix, Nos. 5 and 7, pp. 809–811. The promises were: (i) That all sums due to seamen from the British Government should be paid by the Irish. (ii) That the seamen should have a share of the estates confiscated in Ireland. (iii) Full value should be allowed for all ships brought into Irish or allied ports, *i.e.*, the ports of France, Spain, or any of the new Republics. (iv) Promotion according to ability and merit.

2. "The Central Committee in their proclamation of last year [presumably 1798, but possibily 1797] summoned you, as well as all other Irishmen in the British service, to quit that service as soon as possible. . . . The Central Committee has strong reasons to suspect, both from your inaction and the well known vigilance of your keepers, that the said proclamation has not reached you." This proclamation was probably the same as the pamphlet that was said to have been distributed by Martin Dunnovan in Gosport in 1798—"whilst the rebellion was at its height in Ireland" (*ibid.*, p. 798).

3. Cf. *Castlereagh's Letters and Speeches*, vol. i, p. 306, letter from Turner, the spy, to the Marquis of Downshire: "Duckett is at Hamburg . . . I hear he has got money from the (French) Government for the purpose of renewing the mutiny in the English Fleet."

warning to Admiral King that Connolly was "a very dangerous person," and "was intended to be sent by the United Irishmen of Dublin to stir up sedition in the fleet." And he added that Connolly was a poet and had composed several seditious songs about the Mutinies.[1]

But these events came after the first outbreak in 1796. The question remains whether the same plan had been adopted before any actual mutiny had occurred. Wolfe Tone's letter is not conclusive in itself, because it is not dated. The doubt is resolved, however, by evidence from another source. In a letter written by Cooke, the Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, in June 1797, it is said that more than a year before that time the United Irishmen in Ulster had openly discussed the chance of a mutiny in the fleet.[2] This important letter tends to confirm the date that has been assigned to Tone's address, and it leaves no room for doubt that the United Irishmen helped in some measure to bring about the Mutinies, that long before there was any sign of disorder in the fleet it had been a part of their policy to seduce the seamen from their allegiance.

In all probability the extent of their influence in the fleet will never be known. It would be easy to refer to them the whole responsibility for the outbreak; to imagine that they had planned a general mutiny in the home fleets in order to clear the seas for the invasions from France and Holland.

But there are general indications that they had no such complete plan of campaign before the Mutinies. Even in 1798 there was no proper co-operation between the

1. Captain Lambert Brabazon to Sir Richard King, 2 June. With King's dispatch B 456, A.S.I. 312.

2. Cooke to Greville, 21 June (A.S.I. 4172). I have not been able to find the letter to which he alludes, written by him in the previous year and containing the rumour of an intention to mutiny. It was probably a private letter which was not sent to the Admiralty. Cooke was transferred from the Irish War Office at the beginning of 1795. See an interesting letter to Buckingham, in which Cooke says: "It was through your Lordship's kind and affectionate partiality that I was placed in the War Office." *Buckingham Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 329.

different forces concerned in the rebellion. The great weakness of the United Irishmen was the failure to concentrate their power, to bring all their operations under the control of one authority. Their intelligence was always faulty, and for lack of proper information they were always unduly sanguine. Baseless hopes and exalted visions took the place of solid and useful plans of action. Such records of their counsels as remain show that they cast about for any casual means of injuring their enemy, and were ready to believe the most deceptive rumour if only it would bring them hope. In particular they held the extravagant idea that three-quarters of the men in the fleet were Irish;[1] and the whole of their naval policy seems to have been based on this misconception. The belief would naturally suggest the possibility of a general desertion, and it may have occurred to some of the leaders that a time of mutiny would be a suitable occasion for the landing of a French army. But they never made any arrangement for a combined movement of this sort. In all probability they expected not so much a mutiny, which would only give them a temporary advantage, as the complete downfall of the British fleet, which would leave the French and Dutch in command of the seas.

If they had had any foreknowledge of the Mutinies they would surely have given information both to the French government and to Wolfe Tone. But while the Mutinies were at their height the preparations at Brest and in the Texel were being carried on with such leisure as proves that they cannot have had any connexion with the disturbances in the British fleet. Apart from the incredible story of Moreau de Jonnès, who pretended that he had been involuntarily an agent of the Directory in the Nore mutiny, there is no sign that anything was

1. This is the proportion mentioned in the proclamation of the Central Committee (see above, p. 333). Wolfe Tone, as we have seen, thought that the proportion was at least two-thirds; and even this estimate was more than five times too great (see above, p. 330 n.).

known to the French government of the discontent among the British seamen.[1] Moreover, Wolfe Tone himself, although he would naturally have been the chief agent in securing help from France during the Mutinies, knew nothing about them until the end of April. His opinion of the rising and his ignorance of its origin are clearly shown in his diary.

On April 29 Tone wrote:

> He [Deputy Van Amstell] gives me another piece of intelligence, which, if it be true, I regard as scarcely of less importance than the peace with the Emperor, viz., that there has been a mutiny aboard the English fleet; that the seamen had nearly thrown their Admiral overboard, and that they had tried, condemned and hanged one of their comrades for opposing their measures. This is too good news to be true, and I long most anxiously to see it explained. It has been communicated to the Comité des Relations Extérieures from Hamburgh, so I shall probably learn the truth when I meet my family at Groningen.[2]

He did learn the truth, both of this news and of the later rumours of disaffection in the North Sea fleet; and he saw with anxiety and despair that the ministries of marine in France and Holland were allowing this unique opportunity of invasion to go by, while they delayed and disputed and changed their plans. When he was in Coblentz, on 21 June, he reported a conversation with Hoche, who was expected to lead the next expedition from France. Hoche told him that Truguet, the Minister of Marine, wanted to make the expedition "on a grand scale," and that the fleet would not sail for two months at least. "To which I," said Tone, "knowing Brest of old, and that two months, in the language of the

1. See Moreau's *Aventures de Guerre*, vol. i, pp. 424—461. But his statements are not reliable enough to be treated as history. Moreau's autobiography seems to be a *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in which his imagination was allowed to break loose from the restraint of his statistical work.

2. *Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 207. Tone was in Holland at this time, urging on the preparations in the Texel. He had just had news of the Peace of Campo Formio.

Marine, meant four at least, if not five or six, remarked the necessity of immediate exertion, in order to profit of the state of mutiny and absolute disorganization, in which the English navy is at this moment, in which Lewines heartily concurred. . . . . I besought the General to remember that the mutiny aboard the English fleet would most certainly be soon quelled, so that there was not one minute to lose;[1] that if we were lucky enough to arrive in Ireland before this took place, I looked upon it as morally certain that by proper means we might gain over the seamen (who have already spoken of steering the fleet into the Irish harbours) and so settle the business, perhaps, without striking a blow." [2]

When the Mutinies were ended, and the British fleet was at its full strength again, Tone looked back on the lost opportunity with bitter feelings. At the beginning of August, as the Dutch fleet lay in the Texel, windbound and closely watched by Duncan's reunited squadron, he wrote in his diary :

> Wind still S.W. Damn it, damn it, damn it! I am to-day twenty-five days aboard, at a time when twenty-five hours are of importance. There seems to be a fate in this business. Five weeks, I believe six weeks, the English fleet was paralysed by the mutinies at Portsmouth, Plymouth and the Nore. The sea was open, and nothing to prevent both the Dutch and French fleets to put to sea. Well, nothing was ready; that precious opportunity, which we can never expect to return, was lost; and now that at last we are ready here, the wind is against us, the mutiny is quelled, and we are sure to be attacked by a superior force. At Brest, it is, I fancy, still worse. Had we been in Ireland at the moment of the insurrection of the Nore, we should, beyond a doubt, have had at least that fleet, and God only knows the influence which such an event might have had on the whole British navy. The destiny of Europe might have been changed for ever; but, as I have already said, the great occasion is lost, and we

1. It was too late already. The Nore mutiny had collapsed a week before, but Tone himself had not heard the news.

2. *Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 213, 214.

must now do as well as we can. "Le vin est tiré, il faut le boire."[1]

These quotations from Wolfe Tone's Journal show that the revolt of the seamen was as much of a surprise to Tone himself, to Lewins and the French government, as it was to the government at home. And as the agents of the United Irish Society had no warning of the Mutinies, it is most unlikely that the central committee had any secret information to give them. So that, although the political discontent among the seamen was undoubtedly due in part to Irish influence, there is no reason to believe that the United Irishmen foresaw the actual outcome of their efforts.

In all probability the same conclusion might be applied to the work of the other secret societies. But the evidence of their connexion with the Mutinies is too slight to warrant anything more than this vague supposition. And before a general opinion can be offered in regard to their influence in the navy there are still to be noticed some curious incidents which seem to be the result of their work, but cannot be referred to any one of them in particular.

It is an extraordinary fact that the mutineers at the Nore were always well supplied with money. Certainly they did not need a very large sum; and a part of their expenses could be met by the contributions of the seamen themselves. Nevertheless, there would be very few who had any substantial amount of money with them on board, and fewer still who would be willing to part with what they had. The ordinary wages of the seamen were too small to allow a margin of saving. Many of the volunteers who had received bounty-money must have used it to free themselves from debt, and they would have none left to be contributed to the common purse. The pay of several ships' companies was long overdue, so that that there could not be much coin remaining among them.

1. *Life*, vol. ii, p. 427.

The resources of the seamen therefore would not be adequate to the expenses of the mutiny. Although there was no need to buy victuals and other stores, the delegates at the Nore found others means of spending money, and spent it with a freedom which suggests that it was not their own.

As long as they were allowed to go ashore, they held meetings in the taverns in Sheerness, and after the meetings they held carousals which must have cost a considerable sum.[1] The four delegates who went to Portsmouth in the middle of May were given £20 for their travelling expenses. There is every indication that the mutineers continued their free expenditure as long as they had the opportunity. According to Cunningham, there was a common treasury, under the control of a "secret committee"—possibly the Committee of Internal Regulations. The delegates of the *Iris* and the *Niger* told their captains that they had plenty of money, but that they did not know the source of the supply. The natural supposition is that some part of the money came from an external source.[2]

One or two curious circumstances give support to this idea, although they do not reveal the identity of those who gave the secret endowments. Cunningham says that on 4 June, while the Nore mutiny was at its height, a clergyman who was standing at dusk on Rochester Bridge was accosted by two sailors. They asked him whether he was the "gentleman in black" for whom they were looking.[3] At that time the mutineers were forbidden to communicate with people on shore. The two seamen, therefore, if they were mutineers, as is most probable, ran a considerable risk in coming to Rochester, and the object that would induce them to hazard their lives in this venture must have been of some importance. Its nature is suggested by the rumour that Parker himself

1. *Cunningham*, p. 98.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

had interviews on shore with a "man in black," from whom he received supplies of money, and it is noteworthy that he was on shore all the night on the 3rd or 4th of June.[1] It would be interesting to know whether he was one of the two seamen on Rochester Bridge and what hidden workings on sea and on land underlay their clandestine visit. But these questions must remain as matters for speculation.

In Cunningham's book there is another hint of financial help from people on shore. William Minor, a seaman of the *Champion*, said to one of his officers: "You know, Sir, we have the keys of the nation in our hands, and if every demand of ours were granted we would not give them up, as we have plenty of persons on shore who will support us and supply us with money."[2] It was an idle boast, but Minor does seem to have been justified in saying that there were people on shore who were willing to give money to the mutineers.

It may be asked what motive these unknown confederates of the seamen could have in making their doles. Money, as we have seen, was not essential to the success of the mutiny. Perhaps some of the ringleaders had demanded it, so that if they were forced to take refuge in a foreign port, they might have some means of subsistence. Or, more probably, the money was simply used as a bribe by those who hoped to turn the Mutinies to some political advantage. The possession of money would tend to keep the ringleaders in good heart; and they would be encouraged to prolong the revolt by the thought that they still had friends in the country who were possessed of wealth and influence.

This opinion is borne out by an incident that happened on shore during the second mutiny at Spithead. It was probably a common recreation of the people of Portsmouth and Southsea at that time to watch the unusual traffic

1. *Cunningham*, p. 10.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 136, note 9.

between the fleet and the harbour, and to study the aspect of the mutineers who came ashore to take advantage of their unlicensed holiday. A townsman named Bridgeland was amusing himself in this way on 11 May; and as he stood at the Sally Port, "looking at the sailors going backwards and forwards," his interest was aroused by the appearance of one of the men on the sea-front. This man was dressed in the ordinary clothes of a seaman, but his hands were clean and very "neat," and under a suitably squalid check shirt he wore, too ill-concealed, a white shirt of suspicious cleanliness. Bridgeland saw him approach a sailor who was standing with a girl at the doorway of the "Bell" Inn, and heard him say, "Well, my friend, how do they come on at Spithead? Are things likely to go well there? Shall you get what you want?"

The sailor answered that he thought they would succeed. The stranger put something into his hand, and went away down the road and round a corner. When he had gone, the sailor turned to the girl and said, "That fellow has given me a guinea. Damn him, I don't know him."

And the girl gave the rather inconsequent answer, "Well, never mind; let's have something to drink."

Bridgeland, when he heard the sailor's words and saw the guinea, gave chase to the stranger, but lost him.[1]

The emphasis with which the sailor denied acquaintance with the other man might suggest that in fact they had had some dealings with each other. Moreover, it is difficult to see what motive the stranger could have in giving away a guinea to a common seaman whom he had never met before, and from whom he had received no help nor information. If the motive was simply to prolong the mutiny, the promiscuous distribution of guineas and good wishes was not the best way of bringing about the result. But even if there be no more subtle

1. Graham's report, 19 May (A.S.I. 4172).

explanation of the incident, it is at least an instance of deliberate bribery; and the stranger was clearly some sort of emissary who had taken a disguise in order to go among the seamen without arousing suspicion.

The evidence of a connexion between the secret societies and the navy may end with an allusion to a curious series of documents preserved in the Admiralty records among the miscellaneous papers labelled "Intelligence." The documents are written by a spy, who attended the meetings of one of the societies and reported to the government what he could remember of the proceedings and of his conversation with the members.[1] The reports consist largely of commentaries on parliamentary debates, and they contain one or two affectionate references to Horne Tooke.[2] They are interesting as a whole because they carry the reader at once into the atmosphere of the French Revolution and disclose to him the wild and stormy scene that was the outlook of the English republicans in that day.

But for the purpose of this discussion they have a special value on account of their frequent allusions to the Mutinies. Richard Parker is mentioned several times, not altogether favourably. Everywhere the seamen are regarded with a humanitarian interest, and there are expressions of hope that a better time would come both for the sailors and for the friends of liberty on shore, and dark hints of the means by which the change would be brought about. The reports are too long and diffuse to be quoted in full, but these extracts will show their intent:

1. They are addressed to Lord Spencer and Nepean, so that the writer was evidently an agent of the government. Although he was familiar with the republican rhetoric, he cannot have been a man of much education, for his hand-writing is the worst that I have seen—though possibly the execrable style was used deliberately as a disguise.

2. This fact suggests that the meetings may have been those of the Constitution Society, which became notorious in Tooke's trial; but any of the other societies would regard with equal favour a gentleman who gave such respectable support to their opinions.

June 10th, '97. Toasted: May the Opposition be as true to the people as the needle to the pole.

Horne Tooke and honest men, I believe Mr. Sheridan says true that he loves the sailor, and I am sure that he means not to support tyranny, though I readily believe he knows not what belongs to discipline as used on board the ships. However, may the sailors prove that they are men and will not be lashed or goaded. I heard yesterday that the ship Parker is on board would be between two fires, and that there was no choice to the crew, without they submitted, but to be blown up in the air or sunk in the water—horrid fate for oppressed men. . . . If Parker can make his escape, let him; though if he is destroyed, "the dead may tell tales" remains undisputed, as Mr. Tooke surely proved it by a quotation from Mr. Gibbon last Westminster election. . . . As the navy affair had a sudden rise, perhaps some other matters may have [as] sudden a fall. . . . So much for discipline and order. How much I detest it as described in Voltaire's "Candide" (a book I have lately met with), or in the Gazetteer, if I mistake not, published upon old George's Tyranny, or rather, as it was called, the "Laws of Russia." . . . .

Sailors' Parody:—

> (Britannia) know thy force
> And break the chains of despotic power,
> So shall thy countrymen greet thy doings,
> And welcome thee with songs of triumph.[1]

If the reports are genuine—and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity[2]—they give a direct proof that the revolutionaries in this country strongly supported the revolt of the seamen. There is no sign in these papers, as there is in some parts of the evidence, of financial or personal help,[3] but they show at least that the republicans

1. A.S.I. 3974, pp. 264—269. The reports are quoted at length in Appendix A.

2. Spies are always beset with the temptation to invent news when the truth is not likely to be remunerative; and for this reason we must read their letters with some reserve. But I think that anyone who reads the full text in the Appendix and judges the general character of these reports will be inclined to accept them as genuine.

3. Unless the sentence, "Nor is it possible to have lived in that neighbourhood without being well acquainted with matters as they have happened," be taken to imply that the speaker had been engaged in seditious work in Sheerness. His opinion "that the soldiers had helped on the discontent that prevailed amongst the fleet" gives some support to this view.

on shore were watching the fortunes of the "floating republic" with interest and sympathy.

All the obscure events that have been mentioned in this chapter tend to the conclusion that many members of the secret political societies were active, both in promoting and in trying to maintain the Mutinies. Their motives and their methods have been roughly shown already, but it may be well to summarize them here.

The ultimate aim of the societies was to set up a republican government in Britain. They did not expect to achieve this object by peaceful means, and it would be impossible for them to bring about a violent revolution if the army and navy were against them. On the other hand, if the defensive forces were republican in spirit, nothing could save the government and the monarchy from revolution. So that although the democrats wished to win over all classes of the nation to their opinions, it was particularly important that they should have the goodwill of the soldiers and seamen. The need of such support was appreciated by the republican leaders, and they tried with diligence to turn the defences of the country into an instrument of attack against the government.

The Secret Committee of the House of Commons found abundant proof of the efforts of these conspirators, but it may be doubted whether they were justified in reporting that the political societies had made "systematic attempts" to seduce the soldiers and sailors from their allegiance. The evidence would rather lead to the conclusion that sedition was sown broadcast, and that without the help of accidental circumstances the outcome could have been no more than a few scattered and ineffective risings.

The methods of the revolutionaries point to the same conclusion. Now a pamphlet was issued by one of the societies and attempts were made to introduce it secretly into the garrisons on shore or into the ships when they

were in port. At another time a single soldier would be waylaid, instructed in the evils of the tyrannical system which he was supporting and invited to help with his influence and arms the stealthy advance of the golden age of liberty and reason. And again, a seaman would receive by the post a parcel of revolutionary papers and books from some acquaintance who had adopted the cause of reform; or a slopseller would be induced by the love of liberty or the hope of a reward to hide the seditious literature among his wares.

But all these methods could only produce slight simmerings of discontent: they could not in themselves account for a general rising. The events of the Mutinies showed that very few of the seamen were thoroughly infected with the new political opinions; and in the army, where the occasion of murmuring was very small, there was not even a suspicion of a mutiny.

The political agitators were at a great disadvantage because all their work had to be done in secret. Popular opinion is commonly stirred by methods which give the widest publicity to the views that are to be pressed forward. Newspapers and pamphlets are freely circulated, and orators profit by the instinct that allows the emotions of a crowd to overwhelm the individual reason. But the political consciousness of the navy could not be quickened in this way, because it was only possible to deal with a single man, or a small group of men, at a time.

Moreover, the spreading of sedition in the defensive forces of the country was only one of many schemes for injuring the government. Some people hoped for a general desertion of soldiers and sailors; some for a rising in England, helped by an army of Irishmen, who should cross the sea in small detachments and converge on London. Some thought that the Dutch force from the Texel would land on the east coast of England and take London by surprise; and others held that the Dutch would have better success if they were to land at Leith

and march across to the Clyde, in order to effect a junction with the insurgent army in Ireland. All the revolutionaries looked with hope to the French fleet in the harbour of Brest—the fleet that with fair weather and support from the inhabitants should achieve the liberation of Ireland, and perhaps might work a change in the government of Great Britain as well. These plans were all considered, but none of them was perfected. There was little co-operation among the different groups of conspirators. It was particularly difficult to bring about a joint action with the French and the Dutch, on whom the success of the whole movement depended. Rumours of intended invasions were continually issuing and failing, but no one, even in France, could tell how soon the fleets would be ready.

After the Nore mutiny, Graham, the magistrate who had explored the causes of the rising at Spithead, together with Williams, who had helped him to collect evidence against the ringleaders at the Nore, sent to the Home Office a report on the connexion of the political societies with the mutineers.[1] Their chief conclusion was that there was no connexion. They admitted that mischievous and designing persons had mixed with the seamen and had encouraged them to prolong the Mutinies. But they denied that these persons were agents of the secret societies, and did not consider that they had the least influence with the mutineers. They believed rightly that there were men serving in the fleet who were capable of organizing and carrying out the mutiny without any help from people on shore. But they were certainly mistaken in their opinion that the conduct of the mutineers had been from the beginning "of a wild and extravagant nature, not reducible to any sort of form or order." We

1. The report was discovered by Dr. J. Holland Rose, and published by him in *William Pitt and the Great War* (pp. 316–317). The original is in the Home Office records, George III (Domestic), 41. In the same bundle there is much interesting intelligence of seditious practices on shore,—particularly a number of letters about a group of people who seemed to be spying out the south-west of England to prepare for a French invasion—but unfortunately nothing which throws fresh light on this obscure side of the Mutinies.

have seen that the Mutinies were in reality carefully planned and systematically managed; that the leaders had before them, at least at the outset, definite objects and a fixed policy for attaining them. We have seen that political agitators, who were probably agents of the secret societies, had been actively and successfully at work in the navy before the Mutinies; and that many of the seamen were themselves members of the societies.

We have seen, too, that the influence of the revolutionary doctrines, penetrating through the whole fleet, and stirring the imaginations of the seamen, although it left the loyalty of most of them unshaken, was one of the most important causes of the Mutinies. Graham and Williams, who lived through the crisis, and wrote when it was hardly passed, could not distinguish this fact, which is now perfectly clear. And consequently they did not realize that a majority of loyal men could be allied with a small party of seditious persons in the same enterprise, or that a rising which was manifestly not treasonous could have in any degree a political origin.

But with these reservations we may accept the general sense of the magistrates' report. For the attempts to spread sedition in the fleet, although they were indirectly successful, were only parts of an opportunist policy. It cannot be said that the Mutinies were the outcome of a finished and concerted plan of rebellion; nor that the political malcontents were their sole authors. After the event the leaders of sedition saw the strategic importance of the rising and tried to provoke a fresh outbreak. But in the first instance they did not foresee the result of their efforts. The Mutinies were produced by the accidental concurrence of sedition and discontent. The seeds of disaffection were sown as freely in the army as they were in the navy; but the soldiers remained loyal and contented because they had no serious cause for complaint. In the navy the seed fell on fertile ground. Vague discontent was present already, and it was easily transformed into the determination to rise in revolt.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Whigs.

Thus far we have only been concerned in this inquiry with those people on shore whose intentions were definitely treasonable. But it is natural to wonder whether the Whig party was in any way responsible for the outbreak. The Whigs were very largely in sympathy with the views of the revolutionaries—indeed it would be hard to distinguish extreme Whiggery from sedition. Both parties wished for the fall of the Tory government and for peace with France. Both regarded with favour the principles of the French Revolution and wished to introduce them into this country; although the moderate Whig would only agree to reform by constitutional means, whereas the republican was prepared to use violence. Both alike approved the revolt in the navy, although the Nore mutineers in the end lost favour with the Whigs. The extremists encouraged the mutineers and incited them to open rebellion by the means that have been examined in the last chapter. The Whigs posed in Parliament as friends of the seamen. The question is to be answered whether their support went further than professions of a general sympathy; whether there were any direct dealings between the Whigs and the mutineers.

In the parliamentary report on Seditious Societies it is said that there seemed to be a general belief among the United Britons that "persons of higher situations in life afforded them countenance and pecuniary aid; though from circumstances of caution those persons had not become actually members of the Society."[1] Certain of the mutineers apparently held a similar belief and

1. Report of Secret Committee, pp. 796. 797.

encouraged their fellows with assurances that they had strong and influential friends on shore. Allusion has already been made to the saying of Minor, of the *Champion*, that the seamen had "the keys of the nation" in their hands, and that there were "plenty of persons on shore" who would support them. Jephson, the Irishman, made the extraordinary statement that the Duke of Bedford had given £10,000 to help forward the seamen's cause, and had concealed ten thousand stand of arms for some secret and desperate purpose,—but this wild rumour would hardly be accepted even by the credulous and ill-informed seamen.[1] It is an evidence of friendliness to the Whigs that Daniel Price, of the *Inflexible*, carried in his pocket a portrait of Fox.[2] And if hostility to the government implies a kindly feeling towards the official opposition, it is abundantly shown that the seamen felt themselves to be the allies of the Whigs. The shooting of effigies of Pitt and Dundas, the allusions to "tyrants," and "oppressors," and the "pensioned host"; the general suspicion of the government that was felt at Spithead, and the downright enmity shown at the Nore,—all are evidences of this feeling. And it may be assumed that the sailors would never have mutinied at all unless they believed that a considerable part of the nation would sympathize with them.

The Whigs certainly encouraged the spirit of revolt by their ill-timed and imprudent utterances in Parliament, which spread a baseless suspicion against the ministry. And they gave involuntary support to the Mutinies by other means. Graham complained when he was at Portsmouth, searching out sedition, that the Whigs would not help him, although "to be even lukewarm in their endeavours to put a stop to this dangerous conspiracy would in fact be to assist in destroying themselves." They seemed to be incapable of "distinguish-

1. A.S.I. 727, C 393.
2. *Daniel Price's Pocket-Book*, No. 17, A.S.M. 137.

ing between this and any other political question." They did not understand that it was necessary at times for both political parties to work together against a common domestic enemy. The Mayor of Portsmouth, who was a Whig, actually took into his confidence Brassett, the slopseller who was accused of sedition, and showed him privately the charges which had been brought against him.[1]

There is only one indication, however, of a more direct connexion between the mutineers and members of the Whig party. According to Cunningham, "Captain William Pierrepont, then commanding H.M.S. *Naiad*, lying off Greenhithe, asserted that a certain political character, in the opposition of the day, was seen by himself to arrive in his carriage at the place; and held a communication at a public house with one of the people belonging to the ship." [2] The identity of the "political character" is shown in a letter from Pierrepont himself, in which he says that Whitbread, the prominent member of the Whig party in Parliament, had held two hours' conversation in Purfleet with James Wilson, a seaman who commanded the *Lancaster* during the mutiny.[3] And further light is thrown on the interview by Lieutenant Covell, of the *Lancaster*. He reported on 9 June that he had had an interview with Wilson, who at ordinary times was the captain of the main-top. Covell pointed out the batteries that had been erected on shore, and remarked, "You see that all the country is against you, and you see the Opposition joining with the ministerial party to repel you to your former subordination." "I know that," said Wilson, "for I had half an hour's conversation with Mr. Whitbread the other day." Covell observed that

1. Graham to King, 22 May, A.S.I. 4172.
2. *Cunningham*, p. 136, note p.
3. Capts. P 226, 14 June (Digest). Cunningham made a slight mistake in saying that Wilson belonged to the *Naiad*. The confusion was natural since the evidence was given by the captain of that ship, and the *Naiad* and the *Lancaster* were lying close together in Long Reach.

Whitbread was "a strong opposition man," and Wilson answered, "Yes, Sir, I know that, and he is a good friend of ours."

After this short conversation Wilson rowed away to Purfleet in a jolly-boat. Covell heard rumours that he had gone to meet Whitbread again, and Covell himself thought that he recognized the "political character," standing on the shore.[1] In all probability the interview that is indicated in this letter was the same that was reported by Captain Pierrepont a few days later.

Since these reports of independent witnesses are in agreement there must certainly be some truth in them. But it is impossible to say why Whitbread chose to communicate with Wilson, or what passed between them in the tavern. Clearly the result cannot have been important, for the collapse of the mutiny began very soon after their interview; and the authorities, although they had full knowledge of the charges against Whitbread, did not think it worth while to take any sort of proceedings against him. Even if it be true that Whitbread was in some way privy to the conspiracy at the Nore, the fact does not necessarily involve his party in any complicity. His intervention may have been entirely a private affair, and his object may have been to moderate the violence of the mutineers. The Whigs as a whole do not seem to have been in any way directly responsible for the disaffection, and Lieutenant Covell's letter shows that many of them supported the government in quelling the Nore mutiny.

Their general opinion may be judged from the language of their newspaper writers, who spoke with feeling of the hardships endured by the seamen, and indiscriminately blamed the conduct of the government, but were careful to avoid any commendation of the means by which the seamen set about to redress their grievances.

The *Morning Chronicle* probably reflected, with a little

1. Lieutenants' Letters, C 228, A.S.I. 2807.

exaggeration, the general opinion of the Whig party. In this paper the government was blamed at one time for its weak and dilatory way of dealing with the mutineers, at another time for its inconsiderate violence. When the ministry brought forward the very useful bills for restraining the Nore mutiny and punishing attempts to seduce the soldiers and seamen from their duty, the *Morning Chronicle* had this criticism: "They should consider that there is nothing more justly suspicious than strong measures passed in haste; and they ought to be cautious, in their endeavours to bring back to order an intoxicated body of seamen, how they awaken the jealousy and disturb the minds of all the reflecting body of the people." [1]

Towards the end of the Nore mutiny there appeared a long leading article, in which the conduct of the different parties to the struggle—the seamen, the government and the people—was reviewed and weighed in the balance. This article deserves quotation at some length, because it shows the attitude of the Whig party more clearly than any description can show it:

> At length we have the prospect of an end to the afflicting mutiny at the Nore; and now it becomes the duty of Government to manifest the dignity of the State, and display the magnanimity of the Sovereign. To the expression of the united abhorrence of all descriptions of persons, we are indebted for the rising sentiment that promises the speedy return of the seamen to a just sense of their duty. They must become convinced of their error by the verdict of their country, and to that feeling we must attribute the signs of repentance which they have shown for the rebellious assertion of claims so incompatible with national safety. . . . Nothing could be more exemplary than the disposition which the people have shown through the whole of this alarming crisis. They have falsified all the libels which have been so unwisely thrown out upon them, and they have proved that in proportion to the weakness and dilemma of Government they have given it

1. *Morning Chronicle*, 3 June.

their support, and by their good sense, loyalty and union, have promoted and confirmed the maintenance of order and the reign of law. . . . At a moment when Administration was convulsed to its centre; when all its Satellites were struck with panic; and its most resolute Supporters were only employed in intrigues to pave its way for retirement with impunity . . . we have seen the public peace maintained without a single infringement . . . . and every part of the Kingdom has been emulous in preserving the tranquillity so important to its own happiness, as well as to the welfare of the State. . . . But to terminate this unhappy affair favourably; wholly to remove all the reasonable complaints of the seamen; to deprive them hereafter of any pretence for violent measures, and by a due mixture of justice and leniency, to secure their affections on the side of their Government and Country, will require a magnanimity, a liberality, a manliness of thought, and a knowledge of human nature, which if any one expects to find in the miserable contrivers and conductors of this War, we can only say, he must be ignorant of its whole history.[1]

The ordinary members of the Whig party felt a very proper sympathy with the seamen in their desire to be relieved of their needless hardships—a sympathy which was common to the whole nation. They probably felt as well some excess of humanitarian emotion. And they certainly believed that the government was in some way responsible for the grievances, and was altogether at fault in its method of dealing with the Mutinies.

But although the Whigs did impede the work of the government by an indiscriminate zeal for liberty, and although their expressions of political opinion had an unhappy influence on the seamen, they cannot, as a

1. *Ibid*, 12 June. On 12 October the *Morning Chronicle* published a notice of Richard Parker. In the introductory paragraph the writer said: "To do him justice as a man can detract nothing from the abhorrence with which he ought still to hold the memory of his delinquency." After this saving clause there are two columns of biography and appreciation which do much more than justice to Parker's character, and give very little information that has an appearance of truth.

party, be charged with a deliberate encouragement of the Mutinies. Their sympathy with the seamen was sometimes misplaced, but it was inspired by generous motives. And their interference did no mischief at all comparable with that which was done by the secret societies. The difference between their work in the navy and the work of the secret societies is exactly the difference between constitutional opposition and actual treason.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Summary of the Causes.

We are now in a position to bring together the different conclusions that have been reached in this inquiry, and to make a final estimate of the causes that produced the Mutinies.

The fact which it is most important to realize is that two sets of causes were working together: a general discontent due to bad conditions of service and ill-treatment; and political unrest, due to the importation of "principles of foreign growth." The two causes reacted on each other; for the economic grievance was construed as a political injustice, and the desire for political reform was increased by discomfort and unhappiness. And it chanced that those who were most keenly conscious of physical hardship—the landsmen, that is, and particularly the quota-men—were also the most likely to be infected with sedition. We have therefore regarded these men as the authors of the Mutinies, and as the instruments by which the secret societies were able to spread their influence in the fleet.

In the second place, it may be well to review the means by which the mutinous spirit was fostered and the revolt organized. We have conjectured that in the secrecy of the forecastle the ringleaders would engage their fellows in discussion of their grievances; and on the days of ship-visiting the debates would be extended throughout the fleet. When the consciousness of injustice had grown intense enough, and indignation had been fanned

to a sufficient heat, the means of redress would be considered. Again the ardent spirits would take the lead in urging the adoption of forcible methods, animating the more moderate with the assurance that the nation was on their side, and encouraging the timid with the thought that if their enterprise should fail only the ringleaders would suffer. When once a general agreement had been formed throughout the fleet, the chief conspirators (they were not yet formally chosen as delegates) would communicate with each other by letter and occasionally by word of mouth, and would perfect the details of their policy. Finally when the plan was ready they caused all their followers to take an oath, which was kept with wonderful fidelity, and served to bind the whole body of seamen together in a common purpose.

The question arises why the seamen chose to express their discontent by means of a mutiny, which could only be a temporary measure, although many of them hoped for a more permanent issue of their efforts. The explanation is, firstly, that for those who are subject to discipline a mutiny is the natural means of resistance to authority, as a strike is the natural weapon of those who work by contract; and, secondly, that the mutiny was probably a compromise. An active minority of the seamen would undoubtedly have been glad to desert outright with their ships, and go over to the enemy. But the great majority were quite impervious to any suggestion of treason. They simply wished for the redress of certain grievances, and their very practical conception of political justice and the rights of man was satisfied when those grievances disappeared. At first they would do nothing more drastic than the writing of petitions. When the petitions failed they agreed to enforce their demands by mutiny, but the mutiny in the beginning was entirely passive: it only amounted to a determination not to put to sea. In the continual restraint that was exercised at Spithead, and the ultimate triumph of the peaceable party at the Nore,

there are signs of the check that was put on the turbulent men by those of a more moderate disposition.

The extremists probably thought of the mutiny as a *pis aller* or as a stage in a more comprehensive movement. Some of them may have hoped that it would be the signal for a general rising on the mainland, or they may have thought that it would cause such a panic in the country as would force the government to resign and leave the reforming party in power. There was certainly a hope, which was felt even in the Channel fleet, that the rising would not be final; that it would lead to something more momentous than an increase of wages and a slightly larger plateful at table. Some of the ringleaders must have felt keen disappointment when they saw the mass of their fellow seamen complacently accepting these benefits and returning well satisfied to their duties. Evidence of this feeling is shown in Graham's report of an intention to renew the mutiny in the Channel fleet on the ground of prize-money; in the rumour that the ringleaders were keeping in touch with one another, and wanted to raise a fresh revolt under the command of Valentine Joyce and "one Watkins, a delegate"; and in the later risings, with a definitely treasonous object, on the *Pompée*, the *Glory* and other vessels.

We conclude then that the Mutinies were brought about by the persuasion of an active minority working on a multitude of loyal but dissatisfied spirits. And although by far the greater number of the seamen were content with the simple redress of their grievances, and would not countenance for a moment the suggestion of helping forward a revolution, yet it cannot be denied that there was in the minds even of the most loyal men in the fleet a sense of injustice, a belief in liberty and the rights of man, that was essentially political. It has been pointed out that such a principle was altogether necessary to the existence of a mutiny. Just as mere political agitation, if there had been no discontent on which it could work,

would have effected nothing; so dissatisfaction alone, without the animating ideal which gave direction to the movement, could never have produced a serious revolt.

Finally, we are brought back to the decision that the Mutinies resulted from the fusion of two movements, the one economic and the other political; and that consequently they may be regarded from two points of view. On their economic side they present an early example of a remarkably well organized and successful strike. And in their political aspect they mark the climax of the revolutionary movement in this country.

APPENDIX A.

DOCUMENTS ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY OF THE MUTINIES.

THE FIRST MUTINY AT SPITHEAD.

PETITIONS.

I. FROM THE *DEFENCE* TO THE ADMIRALTY.

[The petition was drawn up on the *Queen Charlotte* and sent to the other ships to be copied. This copy may serve, therefore, as an example of the earlier petitions, written before the Mutiny had been fully organized. The original manuscript was sent to the Admiralty with Sir Peter Parker's dispatch A 354, A.S.I. 1022.]

To the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the seamen on board His Majesty's Ship *Defence* in behalf of themselves and all others serving in His Majesty's fleets

Humbly Sheweth

THAT your petitioners most humbly intreat your Lordships will take the hardships of which they complain into your consideration, not in the least doubting that wisdom and goodness will induce your Lordships to grant them a speedy redress.

It is now upwards of two years since your Lordships' petitioners observed with pleasure the increase of pay which has been granted to the Army and Militia, and the separate provision for their wives or families—naturally expecting that they should in turn experience the same munificence, but alas, no notice has been taken of them nor the smallest provision made for their wives or families.

THAT your Petitioners humbly presume their loyalty to their sovereign is as conspicuous and their courage as unquestionable, as any other description of men in His Majesty's service, and at the present interesting moment when their country calls on

them so pressingly to advance once more to face her foes, your Lordships are entreated to reflect with what additional vigour, with what happy minds, they would fly to their duty, could they have the satisfaction to think their families were enabled to live comfortably at home.

That your Lordships' petitioners humbly request your Lordships will take into consideration the difference between the time their wages was settled, which was in the reign of Charles the First,[1] and the present; at that time their wages was sufficient for a comfortable support, both for themselves and families, but at present, by the considerable rise in every necessary of life, and an advance of 30 per cent. on slops, your Lordships will plainly see that they can but barely support themselves.

Your petitioners therefore relying on the goodness of your Lordships again humbly implore your Lordships' consideration of the matters before stated, and such a complyance of their request as the wisdom and goodness of your Lordships shall think meet.

II. FROM THE DELEGATES TO PARLIAMENT.

[The first petition from the whole fleet, written when the Mutiny was organized and the delegates were elected, so that there was no longer any reason for writing anonymously.]

To the Right Honourable and the Honourable Knights,
Citizens and Burgesses in Parliament assembled :

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the Seamen and Marines on board His Majesty's Ships, in behalf of themselves,

Humbly Sheweth

THAT your petitioners, relying on the candour and justice of your Honourable House, make bold to lay their grievances before you, hoping that, when you reflect on them, you will please to give redress, as far as your wisdom shall deem necessary.

We beg leave to remind your august assembly, that the Act of Parliament passed in the reign of King Charles II wherein the wages of all seamen serving on board His Majesty's fleet was settled, passed at a time when the necessaries of life, and

1. Charles II in other petitions. The writer on the *Defence* probably made a mistake in copying.

slops of every description, were at least thirty per cent. cheaper than at the present time; which enabled seamen and marines to provide better for their families than we can do now with one-half advance.

We therefore request your honourable house will be so kind as to revise the act before mentioned, and make such amendments therein as will enable your Petitioners and their families to live in the same comfortable manner as seamen and marines did at that time.

Your Petitioners, with all humility, laid their grievances before the Honourable Earl Howe, and flattered ourselves that his Lordship would have been an advocate for us, as we have been repeatedly under his command, and made the British flag ride triumphantly over that of our enemies. But, to our great surprise, we find ourselves unprotected by him, who has seen so many instances of our intrepidity, in carrying the British Flag into every part of the seas with victory and success.

We profess ourselves as loyal to our Sovereign, and zealous in the defence of our country, as the army or militia can be, and esteem ourselves equally entitled to his Majesty's munificence; therefore with jealousy we behold their pay augmented, and their out-pensions of Chelsea College increased to thirteen pounds per annum, while we remain neglected, and the out-pensioners of Greenwich have only seven pounds per annum.

We, your petitioners, therefore, humbly implore that you will take these matters into consideration, and, with your accustomed goodness and liberality, comply with the prayer of this petition —and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

We, the Delegates of the Fleet, hereunto sign our names for the ships' companies :

Royal George: Valentine Joyce, John Morice (Morris).
Royal Sovereign: John Richardson, Joseph Tate Green.
London: Alexander Harding, William Riley (Ruly).
Queen Charlotte: John Hudelstone (Udleson), Patrick Glynn.
Glory: Patrick Duggan (Dugan), John Bethell.
Duke: Michael Adams, William Anderson.
Mars: Thomas Allen, James Blythe (Blithe).
Marlborough: William Scraton (Senator), John Vassil (Vassia).
Ramillies: Charles Berry, George Clear.
Robust: David Wilson, John Scrivener.
L'Impetueux: William Porter, John Whitney (Witna).
Defence: George Galloway (Galaway), James Berwick (Barrenck).
Terrible: Mark Turner, George Salkeld (Salked).
La Pompée: William Potts, James Melvin.

Minatour: Dennis Lawler (Lawley), George Crosland.
Defiance: John Saunders, John Husband.

[The names in brackets are those given in *Ann. Reg.* State Papers, pp. 239, 240. I have preferred the version of the signatures in a manuscript petition sent by Bridport to the Admiralty (A.S.I. 5125). Many copies of this form of petition were published at the time of the Mutinies. They may be found in most of the newspapers, and in *Parl. Hist.* (vol. xxxiii), in addition to *Ann. Reg.*]

III. FROM THE DELEGATES TO THE ADMIRALTY, 18 APRIL.

[This document was intended as the opening of the seamen's case in the negotiations. It begins by stating the old grievance of low wages and then discloses a fresh list. As a matter of fact the Board opened negotiations with their own project of reforms (see "Negotiations" I, below).]

To the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

My Lords,

We, the seamen of His Majesty's navy, take the liberty of addressing your Lordships in an humble petition, shewing the many hardships and oppressions we have laboured under for many years, and which we hope your Lordships will redress as soon as possible. We flatter ourselves that your Lordships, together with the nation in general, will acknowledge our worth and good services, both in the American War as well as the present; for which good service your Lordships' petitioners do unanimously agree in opinion, that their worth to the nation, and laborious industry in defence of their country, deserve some better encouragement than that we meet with at present, or from any we have experienced. We, your petitioners, do not boast of our good services for any other purpose than that of putting you and the nation in mind of the respect due to us, nor do we ever intend to deviate from our former character; so far from anything of that kind, or that an Englishman or men should turn their coats, we likewise agree in opinion, that we should suffer double the hardships we have hitherto experienced before we would suffer the crown of England to be in the least imposed upon by that of any other power in the world; we

therefore beg leave to inform your Lordships of the grievances which we at present labour under.

We, your humble petitioners, relying that your Lordships will take into early consideration the grievances of which we complain, and do not in the least doubt but your Lordships will comply with our desires, which are every way reasonable.

The first grievance we have to complain of is, that our wages are too low, and ought to be raised, that we might be the better able to support our wives and families in a manner comfortable, and whom we are in duty bound to support as far as our wages will allow, which, we trust, will be looked into by your Lordships, and the Honourable House of Commons in Parliament assembled.

We, your petitioners, beg that your Lordships will take into consideration the grievances of which we complain, and now lay before you.

First, That our provisions be raised to the weight of sixteen ounces to the pound, and of a better quality; and that our measures may be the same as those used in the commercial code of this country.

Secondly, That your petitioners request your Honours will be pleased to observe, there should be no flour served while we are in harbour, in any port whatever, under the command of the British flag; and also, that there might be granted a sufficient quantity of vegetables of such kind as may be the most plentiful in the ports to which we go; which we grievously complain and lay under the want of.

Thirdly, That your Lordships will be pleased seriously to look into the state of the sick on board His Majesty's ships, that they may be better attended to, and that they may have the use of such necessaries as are allowed for them in time of sickness; and that these necessaries be not on any account embezzled.

Fourthly, That your Lordships will be so kind as to look into this affair, which is nowise unreasonable; and that we may be looked upon as a number of men standing in defence of our country; and that we may in somewise have grant and opportunity to taste the sweets of liberty on shore, when in any harbour, and when we have completed the duty of our ship, after our return from sea; and that no man may encroach upon his liberty, there shall be a boundary limited, and those trespassing any further, without a written order from the commanding officer, shall be punished according to the rules of the navy; which is a natural request, and congenial to the

heart of man, and certainly to us, that you make the boast of being the guardians of the land.

Fifthly, That if any man is wounded in action, his pay be continued until he is cured and discharged; and if any ship has any real grievances to complain of, we hope your Lordships will readily redress them, as far as in your power, to prevent any disturbances.

It is also unanimously agreed by the fleet, that, from this day, no grievances shall be received, in order to convince the nation at large that we know when to cease to ask, as well as to begin, and that we ask nothing but what is moderate, and may be granted without detriment to the nation, or injury to the service.

Given on board the *Queen Charlotte,* by the delegates of the Fleet, the 18th day of April, 1797.

(The signatures of the delegates follow, as in the other petition.)

THE NEGOTIATIONS IN PORTSMOUTH.

OFFICIAL DIARY. (Original in Spencer's writing.)

18th April. About noon the Board of Admiralty arrived at Portsmouth. Lord Bridport and other flag officers came and reported the state of the fleet: that the officers were no longer obeyed in any thing beyond the internal duty of the ships; that a committee consisting of two delegates from each line of battle ship, meeting regularly in the Admiral's cabin of the *Queen Charlotte,* regulate every thing, and have entire command of the fleet. They issue their orders to every ship which are exactly obeyed. They have ropes reeved to the yards of every ship, to hang up any persons who shall attempt to resist; and it is said they have it in contemplation to put all their officers on shore, and that a signal is agreed for the purpose. At 8 o'clock every morning and at sunset every evening they man the yards and cheer. The ships in the completest order possible, and they punish drunkenness and every other offence against discipline with the utmost severity. At first they would not permit any frigate to move, but they have since issued their orders that all frigates may proceed according to their orders with any convoy under their protection, as it was not their intention to interrupt the commerce of the country.

Lord Bridport and the other Admirals stated the disgraceful situation in which they stood, as well as every other officer in

their respective ships, and that it was their decided opinion that the only chance of bringing back the fleet to subordination and the seamen to their duty, was by complying with the demands made in their petitions.

After long and serious deliberation, it was determined that the Board should give an order to Lord Bridport (No. I below) stating what they meant to concede, and directing His Lordship to make the same known to the fleet. This was done accordingly, by Sir Alan Gardner, Admiral Colpoys, and Admiral Pole going on board the *Queen Charlotte* and communicating a copy of the Board's said order to these delegates; who did not appear to be satisfied with the contents, but said they must consult their several ships' companies, and that they would return an answer by 10 o'clock to-morrow morning.

Wednesday, 19th. After waiting with great anxiety till about one o'clock, we then received a note from Sir Alan Gardner to inform us that the delegates said they could not give in their answer before 4 o'clock. About ½ past 5, while we were at dinner, the Admirals Gardner, Colpoys, and Pole came to let us know that they were not satisfied with the offer made, and delivered to us the paper which they had received as their answer, which contain'd a variety of new matter, and some things quite foreign to the subject and the King's service. (No. II.)

At the close of this anxious evening, the whole of which was spent in the most serious consideration of all the circumstances connected with this most alarming business, which was every hour assuming a worse appearance, and big with the most fatal consequences; the disposition to concede evidently producing new and unreasonable demands. It being clear that a stand must be made somewhere, Lord Spencer and the rest of the Board unanimously came to the resolution to declare that having granted as much as in reason ought to satisfy the fleet, no further concession should be made and that this determination should be made known to Lord Bridport in an order, directing him to communicate the same to all the ships under his command; apprizing the seamen at the same time of the consequences that must inevitably attend their persisting any longer in a state of disobedience and mutiny. (No. III.)

It was at the same time resolved to call all the Captains on shore the next morning, early, that the Board should hear from them individually the state of their ships' companies, and also exhort and urge them, upon the delivery of this order, to take immediate advantage of any favourable impression it might

make upon the men, and if possible to get their ships under weigh or to slip their cables and run down to St. Helens, by which they would be removed from the influence of those that might still be refractory and continue at Spithead.

However, upon conference with the Captains the next day viz. :—*Thursday, the 20th,* their unanimous opinions taken, seriatim, as well as two of the Admirals, viz. :—Colpoys and Pole (Sir Alan Gardner delivering himself doubtful, and Lord Bridport saying that it might be tried) that even complying with their petitions for increase of wages to the full extent of their demand, there was not any chance of the men returning to their duty, from the effect of the proposed order above mentioned, without the concession of $\frac{1}{8}$th of provisions which they have asked, and also a considerable concession to the marines, while on board. And the Captains, in general, declaring it to be their firm opinion that their requests being complied with, the men would, immediately and cheerfully, return to their duty without regarding the other extravagant demands contained in their petitions, the Board were reluctantly induced to change their opinion of the night before, and to grant what is expressed in the margin, the latter part of the order remaining as before. (No. IV.)

Friday, 21st, 11 o'clock a.m. Captain Holloway, of the *Duke,* in this moment came in, and informs us that the offer has been well received by his Ship's Company; that he was in great hopes that he should have prevailed upon them to have declared themselves satisfied, and to have immediately returned to their duty, but that one of the men who kept in the background called out that they must do as the *Queen Charlotte* did, and he soon found that it would be in vain to prevent their waiting for the decision of the delegates on board the latter ship before they returned to their obedience.

Presently after, Lord Bridport came in and shewed us a letter he had just received from Admiral Pole in the *Royal George,* saying that the offer was very well received on that ship, and appeared to satisfy the people, but as to the rest, agreeing with Captain Holloway's report upon this, it occurred to us that it might possibly have a considerable effect upon their delegates if something of the nature of the paper (No. V) was to be in this state of things immediately stated to them by Admirals Gardner, Colpoys and Pole, who were gone to them on board the *Queen Charlotte.* That paper was therefore in great haste, drawn up and sent off by Captain Holloway to them, as also a memorandum (No VI) from Lord Spencer to shew and convince

them that the pardon held out to them by the Admiralty was quite sufficient to secure them from any punishment for their mutinous and disobedient conduct on this occasion.

In the evening of this day, the Admirals Gardner and Pole came to us at Sir Charles Saxton's where we had dined, and Sir Alan Gardner related that their offer had been received with the greatest apparent satisfaction by his ship's company, but they reserved their decision till a meeting of the delegates in the *Queen Charlotte* had been held. The two from Sir Alan's ship (the *Royal Sovereign*) went thither immediately and promised directly to send their determination to him. However, after waiting a long time, he determined with the Admirals Colpoys and Pole, to go on board the *Queen Charlotte* and once more endeavour to make some impression upon them. He found them all assembled but four, viz. :—those from the *Queen Charlotte* and those from the *Royal George*, who were gone ashore. The remainder expressed themselves perfectly contented and satisfied, and Sir Alan Gardner prevailed upon them to let him draw up a paper for them to sign, expressive of their submission and gratitude for the benefits conceded to them. Before this paper was finished, the other four delegates returned from the shore and immediately went below amongst the people and persuaded that the Admirals were come on board to impose upon and deceive them, and that unless they actually had the King's pardon, they could have no security on submission. That the mutineers on board the *Culloden* had been deceived with hopes of forgiveness, and afterwards some of them executed. Sir Alan Gardner appears to have exerted himself as much as a man could do to counteract the false and mischievous insinuations of these men, but all to no effect, and after experiencing much disrespectful treatment, even expressions of, "Off, off, we won't hear him," &c., from the people of that ship, the Admirals came away.

The delegates soon returned to their respective ships, but some time afterwards a red flag was hoisted at the foretop of the *Royal George* (the signal for them to repair on board that ship) upon which Captain Domett immediately struck Lord Bridport's flag.

About this time Admirals Gardner and Pole left the fleet, to come and make their report to the Admiralty of all that had passed. Admiral Colpoys continued in his ship, the *London*.

I. THE FIRST PROJECT OF REFORMS (18 April).

Having taken into our consideration the petitions transmitted by your Lordship from the crews of several of H.M. Ships under your command, and having the strongest desire to attend to all the complaints of the seamen in H.M. Navy, and to grant them every just and reasonable redress, and having considered the difference in the prices of the necessaries of life at this time and at the period when the pay of the seamen was established; we do hereby require and direct your Lordship to take the speediest method of communicating to the fleet that

We have resolved to recommend it to His Majesty to propose to parliament to increase the wages of the seamen in His Majesty's service, in the following proportions, viz. :—to add four shillings per month to the wages of petty officers and able seamen, three shillings per month to the wages of ordinary seamen, and two shillings per month to the wages of landsmen; that

We have also resolved that seamen wounded in action shall be continued in pay until their wounds are healed or until and being declared incurable they shall receive a pension, or shall be received into Greenwich Hospital; and

Having the most perfect confidence in the zeal, loyalty and courage of all the seamen in the fleet, so generally expressed in their petitions, and in their earnest desire of serving their country with that spirit which always so eminently distinguished British seamen,

We have come to this resolution the more readily, that the seamen may have as early as possible an opportunity of shewing their good disposition by returning immediately to their duty as it may be necessary that the fleet should speedily put to sea to meet the enemies of their country. Given under our hands at Portsmouth the 18th day of April, 1797.

(Signed) SPENCER, ARDEN, W. YOUNG.

To the Rt. Hon. Lord Bridport, K.B., Admiral of the White, Commander in Chief of a Squadron of His Majesty's ships employed in the Channel Soundings, &ca.

By Command of their Lordships,

(Signed) W. MARSDEN.

Admiral Lord Bridport delivered to R. Admiral Pole at Portsmouth, 18th April at ½ past 4 p.m.

II. THE SEAMEN'S ANSWER (19 April).

My Lords,

We received your Lordships' answer to our petition, and in

order to convince your Lordships and the nation in general of our moderation, we beg leave to offer the following remarks to your consideration.

That there never has existed but two orders of men in the navy, able or ordinary, and landsmen is totally new. We therefore humbly propose to your Lordships that the old regulations be addherred to, that the wages of able seamen be fixed at one shilling p. day, and that of petty officers and the ordinary in proportion, and as a further proof of our moderation and that we are actuated by a true spirit of benevolence towards our Brethren the Marines who is not mention'd in your Lordships' answer,

We humbly propose that their pay be augmented when serving on board in the same proportion as ordinary seamen, this we hope and trust will be a convincing proof to your Lordships that we are not actuated by a spirit of contradiction, but that we earnestly wish to put a speedy end to the present affairs.

We beg leave to state to your Lordships that every Seaman employed in the Merchant Service instead of 6d. per month which they now pay, shall hereafter pay 1 shilling p. month, which we trust will raise a fund fully adequate to the purpose, and as this in time of peace must be paid by your petitioners, we trust that this will be a convincing proof of our disinterestedness and moderation. We would also recommend that this Regulation be extended to the Seamen in the service of the East India Company, as we know by Experience that there are few Seamen employed by them but what have been in the Navy, and we have seen them with our eyes after sickness, or other accidents has disabled them without any hope of relief but from their former services in the Navy.

With regard to the augmentation, would wish with regard to our provisions that we should have 16 ounces to the pound of bread, and meat, liquor, butter and cheese in proportion and of a better quality. With a sufficient quantity of vegetables, no flour with fresh beef.

We, the Fleet, beg leave to acquaint your Lordships that it is unanimously agreed that until these grievances before stated be redressed and the Act of amendment passed, we are determined not to lift an anchor, and the grievances of the particular ships already stated be redressed.

[Signed by the delegates of the Fleet.]

III. REFUSAL OF FURTHER DEMANDS (19 April).

[This letter was not delivered: No. IV was sent instead on the following day.]

By the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain, Ireland, &c.

Having taken into our consideration a paper which has been sent to us from some of the Seamen of the fleet now at Spithead, proposing several new regulations, most of which are entirely foreign to the petitions transmitted to us from the seamen of the said fleet by your Lordship, and many of which have not even any relation to the situation of seamen in His Majesty's Navy. We find nothing in them that can induce us to alter our opinion as to what is reasonable and proper to be done in order to afford every necessary relief to the seamen and to remove from them all just cause for complaint.

We do therefore hereby repeat the Resolutions we sent to your Lordship yesterday, namely: That we will recommend it to His Majesty that four shillings per month should be added to the present wages of petty officers and able seamen, that three shillings per month should be added to the wages of ordinary seamen, and that two shillings per month should be added to the wages of landsmen; and that all men wounded in action should receive their full pay until their wounds shall be healed, or until, being declared incurable, they shall receive a pension from the chest at Chatham, or shall be admitted to the Royal Hospital at Greenwich. With regard to the quality and quantity of provisions served to the men in His Majesty's Navy, it has been and ever will be our intention that they shall be of the best quality, and being convinced that the quantity now served is sufficient, we see no reason to increase it.

And your Lordship is hereby required and directed to communicate this our determination to the Captain of each of His Majesty's Ships under your orders, directing him to make it known to the ship's company under his command, and to inform them that should they be insensible to the liberal offers now made to them, and persist in their present disobedience, they must no longer expect to enjoy those benefits to which by their former good conduct, they were entitled; that in such case, all the men now on board the fleet at Spithead shall be incapable of receiving any smart money or pension from the chest at Chatham or of being at any time admitted into the Royal Hospital at Greenwich; and that they must be answerable for the dreadful consequences which will necessarily attend

their continuing to transgress the rules of the service, in open violation of the laws of their country.

On the other hand, he is to inform them that we promise the most perfect forgiveness of all that has passed on this occasion to every ship's company who within the hour after the communication to them of the above mentioned resolutions, shall return to their duty in every particular, and shall cease to hold further intercourse with any men who continue in a state of disobedience and mutiny.

(Signed) SPENCER, ARDEN, W. YOUNG.

Given under our hands the 19th April, 1797,

To the Rt. Honble. Lord Bridport, K.B.,
Admiral of the White, &c. &c. &c.,
By Command of their Lordships,
W. MARSDEN.

IV. NEW PROJECT OF REFORMS (20 April).

By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &ca.

Having taken into consideration a paper containing several representations from the Seamen of His Majesty's ships at Spithead respecting an increase of their wages, and being desirous of granting them every request that can with any degree of reason be complied with, we have resolved to recommend it to His Majesty that an addition of five shillings and six pence per month be made to the wages of petty officers and able seamen belonging to His Majesty's Navy, which will make the wages of an able seaman one shilling per day, clear of all deductions, and an addition of four shillings and sixpence per month to the wages of ordinary seamen, and an addition of three shillings and six pence per month to the wages of landsmen; And that none of the allowances made to marines when on shore shall be stopped on their being embarked on board of His Majesty's ships. We have also resolved that all seamen, marines and others serving in His Majesty's ships shall have the full allowance of provisions without any deductions for leakage or waste, and that 'til proper steps can be taken for carrying this into effect, short allowance money shall be paid to the men in lieu of the deductions heretofore made; and that all men wounded in action shall receive their full pay until their wounds be healed or until, being declared incurable, they shall

receive a pension from the chest at Chatham, or shall be admitted into the Royal Hospital at Greenwich.

[The rest of the document is a repetition of the last two paragraphs of No. III.]

Given under our hands at Portsmouth, the 20th April, 1797.

(Signed) SPENCER,
ARDERN,
W. YOUNG.

To the Rt. Honble. Lord Bridport,
Admiral of the White, &c. &c. &c.,
By command of their Lordships,
W. MARSDEN.

V. MEMORANDUM OF THE ADMIRALTY FOR THE MEETING OF DELEGATES (21 April).

That the effect already produced by the liberal offers of the Admiralty in the several ships' companies is evidently such that they will be ultimately accepted by the fleet; and therefore that if the men from the several ships now assembled in the *Queen Charlotte* do not immediately accede thereto (they being all well known) they may rely upon it that they will be brought to condign punishment and suffer the utmost vengeance of the law. But, on the contrary, should they submit with alacrity, they will experience the forgiveness for which the Board of Admiralty have publickly and solemnly pledged their faith to them.

[This memorandum was taken to the *Queen Charlotte*, by Captain Holloway, to open the negotiations between the Admirals and the delegates.]

VI. MEMORANDUM FROM THE ADMIRALTY (21 April).

Sir Alan Gardner having signified to Lord Spencer and the Board of Admiralty the universal good disposition and satisfaction that had shown itself throughout the fleet on the very generous offers which have this morning been made to them; and understanding that the only obstacles that prevented their immediate return to their duty was the doubt which still remained in their minds of a free pardon up to the present time for their late illegal conduct: In consequence thereof, Sir Alan Gardner has just now received the following declaration, which

he judges it expedient to communicate, and trusts it cannot possibly fail of fully satisfying every man's mind in the fleet, viz. :—

"The Board of Admiralty, having under their hands promised forgiveness on the ships' companies complying with the conditions offered of immediately returning to their duty, will most completely secure them from punishment if they comply with those conditions, because, under that promise, no court could pronounce sentence against them, even if they suppose it possible that the Board of Admiralty, having publicly pledged their faith and honour to them, could ever be brought to break it.

(Signed) SPENCER."

And addressed to Sir Alan Gardner, Bart.

A. GARDNER.

[This note was drawn up by Gardner and approved by the Board. It was intended to soothe the minds of the seamen after the disastrous meeting on the *Queen Charlotte*. The reference to this memorandum in Spencer's report would suggest that it was taken by Captain Holloway, with No. V. But internal evidence shows that it was written to set at rest the suspicions which arose during the meeting. The original draft is in Gardner's own writing, and is signed by him. It could not, therefore, be drawn up by the Board. Moreover, there could be no reason for sending this memorandum and No. V at the same time.]

THE "TOTAL AND FINAL ANSWER" OF THE SEAMEN (22 April).

To the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

We the seamen and marines in and belonging to His Majesty's fleet now lying at Spithead, having received with the utmost satisfaction, and with hearts full of gratitude, the bountiful augmentation of pay and provisions which your Lordships have been pleased to signify shall take place in future in His Majesty's royal navy, by your order, which has been read to us this morning, by the command of Admiral Lord Bridport;

Your Lordships having thus generously taken the prayer of

our several petitions into your serious consideration, you have given satisfaction to every loyal and well disposed seaman and marine belonging to His Majesty's fleets : and, from the assurance which your Lordships have given us respecting such other grievances as we thought right to lay before you, we are thoroughly convinced, should any real grievance or other cause of complaint arise in future, and the same be laid before your Lordships in a regular manner, we are perfectly satisfied that your Lordships will pay every attention to a number of brave men who ever have, and ever will be, true and faithful to their King and country.

But we beg leave to remind your Lordships, that it is a firm resolution that, until the flour in port be removed, the vegetables and pensions augmented, the grievances of private ships redressed, an act passed, and His Majesty's gracious pardon for the fleet now lying at Spithead be granted, that the fleet will not lift an anchor : and this is the total and final answer.

REPLY TO THE "TOTAL AND FINAL ANSWER" (24 April).

[Nepean to Bridport.] After the very liberal additions made to the wages and to the allowance of provisions to the seamen in His Majesty's ships, their Lordships cannot but look upon those further demands to be very unreasonable.

The request that the further issue of a proportion of flour, in lieu of meat, may be discontinued, cannot at this time be complied with, it being impossible to procure a quantity of the last mentioned article of provisions sufficient for the consumption of the fleet; but whenever the present difficulties in that respect can be removed, it has always been their Lordships' intention to cause the full proportion of fresh beef to be supplied.

The quantity of vegetables now served to seamen in port, is much greater than was ever served in any former war, and a proper quantity will always be furnished—but instead of unreasonably asking for more, they ought to be most thankful for that with which, at a great expense to the country, they are now supplied.

With respect to an increase of the out-pensions of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, I am to state to your Lordship that the present revenues of the said Hospital do not admit of a compliance with this request; and when the burthens which must necessarily be laid upon the public, in consequence of the

increase of wages, are considered, it cannot be expected that any additional sum can be appropriated to this purpose, or the expedient proposed can be resorted to for removing the difficulty.

On the subject of the complaints which have been made against the different officers, it must be understood that all such complaints ought to be made to the commander in chief, and there can be no doubt should the circumstances appear to justify it, that the officers complained of will be brought to court-martial. Without that mode of inquiry into the merits of the different cases, their Lordships' regard for justice will not admit of their inflicting punishment or censure. But as the characters of officers are not to be lightly attacked, the seamen should be admonished not to prefer any complaint against them without having good cause for so doing.

In consequence however, of the favourable change that has taken place in the situation of things, their Lordships are inclined to hope that all animosities have ceased, and that the complaints which were brought forward in a moment of ill-humour may now be suffered to drop—more especially when the seamen reflect upon the zealous part which their officers have taken in prevailing on their Lordships to consent to the indulgences which have been granted to them.

[The concessions refused in this letter were, as a matter of fact, granted later; but the refusal must have helped to prejudice the minds of the seamen against the Admiralty, and in this way it must have encouraged the renewal of the Mutiny.]

MEETING WITH FLAG OFFICERS AND CAPTAINS.

(20 April, at Sir Peter Parker's house.)

Lord Spencer's rough notes.

[Answers to the question whether it would be possible to take the fleet to St. Helens.]

Captains Payne, Domett, Lock, Bedford, Sir R. Bickerton, Thornborough, Griffith, Jones, Louis, Hood, Campbell, Wells, Holloway, Vashon, Nicholls, Brine : No.

Admiral Sir A. Gardner : Doubtful.

Admiral Colpoys : No.

Admiral Pole : No.

Admiral Lord Bridport : Thinks it might be tried.

It being proposed that :—

1. 5/6 shall be added to the wages of the able seamen per month. 4/6 per month to the wages of ordinary seamen, and 3/6 per month to the wages of the landsmen serving on board His Majesty's fleet.

2. That the eighth be no longer deducted from the allowance of provisions, and that till the necessary steps can be taken to carry this into effect, short allowance money shall be paid.

[Previous suggestions :—

(*a*) That 1/6 per month be allowed to every seaman and marine serving on board His Majesty's Fleet, as a compensation for the 8th deducted from their allowances of provisions.

(*b*) 4th of June next, being his Majesty's birthday.

(*c*) That no further deduction shall—]

3. That the marines when embarked on board His Majesty's ships shall receive the same allowances as they now do on shore.

[Deleted :—be allowed 4/6 per month in addition to the pay which they now receive.]

4. That the regulations respecting wounded men, as stated in the Admiralty order of the 18th be adopted.

[Spencer's Report and the accompanying letters and notes are all in the Rough Minutes, A.S.M. 136, except the "Total and Final Answer," which is printed in *Ann. Reg.*, State Papers, p. 244.]

THE SECOND MUTINY AT SPITHEAD.

LETTER FROM JOHN FLEMING, OF THE *LONDON*, TO THE DELEGATES.

You have, I presume, read the address of the ship's company, of which I am a member, to you, recommending me as their representative in future; they have given me the most flattering proofs of their opinion of my abilities to act as a man and a Christian ought to do. Under these circumstances, I flatter myself you will hear me with patience, as I am partly convinced your own sentiments, when compared with mine, will join me in saving a deserving character from ruin and destruction. I shall not dwell on the particulars of yesterday, they, I am confident, are still warm in your memories, but only recall your attention to the behaviour of your brother, Valentine Joyce.

His intrepidity in rescuing the unfortunate gentleman from the hands of an enraged multitude will, I am sure, make a deep impression on your minds, and will, I hope, influence you to act in a manner worthy the character of Christians and British seamen; thus much, my brethren, for preface.

Permit me now to speak for that ship's company whose confidence I enjoy. In the first place, had they followed the momentary impulse of passion, and wreaked their vengeance on that unfortunate gentleman, a few minutes would have brought to their recollection the amiable character he always bore amongst them, and I am confident, would have embittered the latest moments of their lives. Now, my brethren, your general cry is "Blood for blood." Do you mean that as a compliment to us to assist us in following error after error? If so, it is a poor compliment indeed; or do you, let me ask you, think it justice? I hope not; if you do, pray, from whence do you derive the authority to sit as a court over the life of even the meanest subject. The only answer you can give me is, that you are authorised by your respective ship's companies. But is that authority sufficient to quiet your conscience for taking the life even of a criminal, much more that of a deserving and worthy gentleman, who is an ornament to his profession in every respect? I can almost safely say you will say "No." But if you are to be influenced by your ships' companies, contrary to your own opinion, I am but a single individual among you, and before this hand of mine shall subscribe the name of Fleming to anything that may in the least tend to that gentleman's prejudice, much more his life, I will undergo your utmost violence, and meet death with him hand in hand. I am, nevertheless, as unanimous as any member in the fleet for a redress of your grievances, and maintain that point with you all, so long as you are contented with your original demands, but the moment I hear of your deviating from these principles, that instant I become your most inveterate enemy.

You see, brethren, I act openly, and am determined to support it, as I will never form a part to do injustice to my country; and for the future, I shall expect that whatever comes before us shall be only conducive to the much wanted and desirable end of restoring this fleet to the confidence of our injured country. Let these be your aims, and you may depend upon every support from me and this ship's company. And be assured, that the life and character of Mr. Bover shall always remain inviolate in our hands; and we think any step to the contrary highly

injurious to ourselves as brothers of your community. We expect your answer this night; and I beg leave to remain,

Yours most sincerely,

JOHN FLEMING.

[From the Appendix to the "Letter to Sir T. B. Martin," by Admiral Sir E. G. Colpoys. According to Colpoys, Fleming did a great deal to moderate the temper of the *London's* company, and the safety of the captive officers was largely due to him. Colpoys adds: "It will be easily supposed that the merit of this man was duly apreciated on the termination of the troubles."]

THE MUTINY AT THE NORE.

VISIT OF THE LORDS OF THE ADMIRALTY TO SHEERNESS.

MARSDEN TO NEPEAN.

Sheerness,
29th May, 1797,
9 a.m.

Dear Nepean,

I wrote you an unsatisfactory note by last night's post, and I am sorry to say that things do not this morning wear much more the appearance of settlement than they did at that time. Late in the evening the Board had, through the Admiral, some communication with the delegates, who were assembled in great numbers in the Commissioner's house. They at first insisted upon the Lords of the Admiralty coming off to the Nore. This was out of the question. They also talked of having their grievances taken into consideration. They were told that all grievances were redressed; that no discussion could possibly take place; but that if they were disposed to declare their acceptance of His Majesty's most gracious pardon, they would be allowed to do it personally to their Lordships, who would then pronounce to them the pardon in the King's name. Upon this they chose to retire, and went on board their ships.

We afterwards directed Captain Mosse to intimate to them that it was expected they should declare their acceptance of the pardon and return to their duty by noon this day, when they were to understand the Admiralty flag would be struck, and their Lordships leave the town. But we shall not be precise to

that hour. There is evidently a division and much agitation amongst them. The smaller ships are all well disposed and the *Director* is wavering. They said that they should secede this morning if the *Sandwich* and *Inflexible* did not come in, but there is no relying upon their promise, as they are completely under the influence of terror. The *Niger's* ship's company in the harbour is the only one that has shewn itself above it, and pledged themselves in defiance of threats to stand by their officers.

Sir Charles Grey is a fine spirited fellow and eager that the temporizing system should be at an end. But things must not be precipitated whilst there is a chance of effecting the purpose by negociation. General Fox also dined with us. . . . I believe there has not been any fresh act of violence, and I cherish the hope that we shall effect something in the course of the day. With best compliments to our good friends in the Board Room, and to Mrs. Nepean,

I am, dear Nepean,
As ever, yours,
WILLIAM MARSDEN.

SPENCER TO NEPEAN.

Sheerness,
29th May.

Dear Nepean,

I am sorry I cannot yet give you such a report as I could wish of the state of things here; indeed it is such at present that I have but very slender hopes of its taking a good turn. We lost no time in distributing the King's declaration, with the proper instructions to the several officers to explain very clearly the determination with which we came here, and the object of our coming. The immediate effect of it was pretty good, as about seven ships of those at the Nore hoisted Admiral Buckner's colours, but being frigates and small ships they could not continue to keep them up for fear of the large ships, particularly the *Sandwich* and *Inflexible*, the latter of these two being the most violent and desperate, with her guns loaded up to the muzzle, ready and apparently very desirous of making use of them. The *Clyde* and *San Fiorenzo* were to have slipped and gone to Harwich in the night, but by some mistake about the captains meeting to concert the plan, and the want of pilots, those here being intimidated and refusing to act, this did not take place. And it is perhaps fortunate that it did not, as to-day the *Director's* people have communicated with them a

promise to support them. Should they keep their word, we shall have to reckon among our friends the *Director*, the *Clyde*, the *San Fiorenzo*, *Iris*, *Ganges*, *Serapis*, *Brilliant*, and *Pylades*, besides the crews of the *Espion* and *Niger* in the harbour, who are disposed (especially the latter) to do anything either afloat or ashore that may be wished of them,—a lucky circumstance, as they will, in case of hostilities, be of great use in the dockyard and garrison.

In the evening of yesterday the delegates came on shore headed by Parker, and desired to have a conference with the Lords of the Admiralty, having first enquired whether we were the same Lords who had been at Portsmouth. We sent for answer by the Commissioner that we could only communicate through the Admiral; and accordingly the Admiral went out to them at the door and asked what they had to say. Their first point was that we should go on board the *Sandwich*. This the Admiral said he knew would not be complied with, and after some little time, spent in arguing the point with them, they gave it up. They then (Parker always the spokesman) insisted on seeing us, and on our inquiring through the Admiral and Commissioner what they had to say to us, they said they desired the Board would ratify the same terms to them as had been granted at Portsmouth and would promise to take into consideration the other articles which they had since brought forward. We sent them word that we positively refused to concede any other points than those which had already been granted to them in common with the rest of the fleet, and could only see them for the purpose of hearing from them that they had returned to their duty, and had accepted of His Majesty's pardon as offered in his royal declaration. On this they instantly went away, without saying a word more, and soon afterwards took to their boats and went on board. Their behaviour was quiet and orderly : every man's hat was decorated with red or pink ribbon, but there was no huzzaing or musick or any other sort of parade or noise. Late last night we sent a message off by Captain Mosse of the *Sandwich*, who went to sleep on board his ship, saying that we expected to hear of the ships having returned to the regular discharge of their duty by twelve o'clock to-day.

Sir C. Grey is still here to wait the event, and is prepared to take the most vigorous means of *defence* that this situation will afford. He is quite confident of the troops. General Fox seems not so much so. Yours very sincerely,

SPENCER.

9 *a.m.* I return you Duncan's letters, which are very unpleasant, but bad as they are, I rather fear we must come to that issue at last. . . . . You will of course shew this to Mr. Pitt, &c.

MARSDEN TO NEPEAN.

Rochester,
29 May, 1797,
Midnight.

Dear Nepean,

I wrote you this morning a brief account of our negociation, and I am sorry to add that the hopes I expressed were not fulfilled. The delegates, or rather the majority of them, insisted upon new conditions, and the Board found it necessary to leave Sheerness, which was done at half-past eight this evening. It now remains to try what vigorous measures will produce, after having in vain attempted to persuade them to accept His Majesty's pardon. Sir Charles is prepared to cut off all communication with them, and I think they will soon find their situation more alarming than they have been used to consider it. Mr. Parker's letters will amuse you. I shall not be much surprised to hear that they have hanged him by one of his own yard-ropes, for his assumed importance begins to give considerable umbrage. We expect that the *Clyde*, the *San Fiorenzo* (whose delegates were driven away from their last meeting on shore) will anchor at the Little Nore to-night, and possibly the *Director* may follow the example. Particular directions were given to the Admiral for his guidance previously to our setting off, and all who from henceforth attempt to land will be detained, the gun boats stopped, &ca. When the salute was fired to-day, the red flag was at the main, and the royal standard at the fore. Such is their insolence. After all, I cannot help thinking it probable that they will all, or almost all, come in, upon finding that there is to be nothing more got by parleying and that Government mean to act with firmness and decision. You will know in the morning by the telegraph if any decided step has been taken either by their High Mightinesses or by those who have the command on shore. I am satisfied that Sir Charles Grey will do everything that he ought to do. It is to be regretted that he did not command the Austrian armies in Italy. Please to recollect that this is written after supper.

The people at the Nore have certainly been encouraged to hold out by the prospect of assistance from the disaffected of

Duncan's squadron. They knew as well as we did that some ships were left at Yarmouth. Lord Spencer writes about the propriety of stopping correspondence at the P.O. They must by every possible means, be cut off from intercourse with the shore, and the Essex side of the river must be attended to in this view. There is so much division among them that their real force is not formidable. We shall be in town about noon.

I am, dear Nepean,
Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM MARSDEN.

SPENCER TO NEPEAN.

Rochester,
29th May, 1797,
½ p. 11 p.m.

Dear Nepean,

We left Sheerness this evening at half past eight o'clock, having failed in our attempt to restore order and obedience, though I hope we have placed everything in a train more likely to lead to a permanent restoration of it than any compromise or accommodation could have done, which was produced by further concessions on our part. We have adhered most strictly and rigidly to the line we have prescribed to ourselves, and at the same time that we have given the mutineers full time to consider the subject, have avoided yielding to them a single point. The consequence has been that several ships are disposed to declare themselves satisfied, and to them we have offered the King's pardon, and have taken proper measures for endeavouring, if possible, to withdraw them from the rest. Every precaution has been taken to defend the dock-yard and garrison, and to resist all attempts of violence which the mutineers may make. The best possible disposition reigns in the dock-yard people, and the crew of the *Niger* and *Espion*; and to-morrow morning all the gunboats in the harbour (some of which were obliged by stress of weather to come in from the Nore to-day) will be taken possession of, either secured or so placed as to contribute to the defence of the harbour.

Sir C. Grey has given the necessary orders for the protection of the well and the ferry, and has ordered two more regiments to march to the garrison, meaning to send away at least one of those now there. All further communication with the disaffected ships has been forbidden, and every boat that comes (unless for the purpose of submission) is to be seized and the people sent off prisoners to Chatham. No stores of any kind are to be sent off to the Nore, and no armed vessels under the direction of

the mutineers are to be permitted to pass the batteries. It will be very desirable that instructions should be sent to Colonel Nesbitt as soon as possible to detain all boats or other vessels that may come up from the Nore and to secure all the people on board of them; and I wish to submit to Mr. Pitt the propriety of ordering the post office to stop every letter addressed to any of the disaffected ships, as nothing is more likely to bring them to reason than finding themselves quite cut off from the country.

I shall see General Innes to-morrow morning before I set off from here, to arrange with him how to dispose of the prisoners he may receive from Sheerness, and I suppose we shall be in town about twelve o'clock.

Yours very sincerely,
SPENCER.

[The original letters are in the Rough Minutes, A.S.M. 137.]

EXTRACTS FROM INTELLIGENCE OF A POLITICAL CLUB.

[See above, p. 342.]

June 10th, '97.

TOASTED:.

May the Opposition be as true to the people as the Needle to the Pole.

Horne Tooke and honest men, I believe Mr. Sheridan says true that he loves the sailor, and I am sure he means not to support tyranny, though I readily believe he knows not what belongs to discipline as used on board the ships. However, may the sailors prove that they are men, and will not be lashed or goaded. I heard yesterday that the ship Parker is on board would be between two fires, and that there was no choice to the crew without they submitted but to be blown up in the air or sunk in the water—horrid fate for oppressed men. I also credit the opinion of those people at Sheerness who say that the soldiers have helped on the discontent that prevailed amongst the fleet, nor is it possible to have lived in that neighbourhood without being well acquainted with matters as they have happened; nor will, I trust, the Sedition Bills always remain in force. I have read with attention part of the Duke of

Grafton's speech, May 30th, also that of Lord Hawkesbury, May the 26th, and must more than guess his speeches are not much to his credit—or why object to the publication of them? A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse; A plot, a plot, the kingdom for a plot. G——s parody (Shakespeare). Military at Rochester under the command of the civic power. Fearful times. Letters brought to Portland's office. Hum, hum, hum. It will be serious indeed if there is a want of fresh water at Sheerness. Heaven keep the garrison from an epidemic distemper. These may be the beginning of sorrows, but who can say what will end them? Surely the beacons being destroyed may be as much inconvenience one side as the other, as the navy affair had a sudden rise, perhaps some other matters may have (as) sudden a fall. Question for the learned: If trial by jury is destroyed, is not Government a mob Government? Let what side will prevail, this hint is a powerful one and worthy of notice.

June 11th.

This day I think it is far better that every woman should be common to the English soldiers than that the soldiers should be willing to cut the throats of Englishmen; nor am I afraid that the sailors will not fight in a good cause. It is of no use to abuse Parker, the delegate, I despise him, not admitting he was the man that inspired the sailors with courage enough to say that the merchants should go without turtle if the sailors were not employed by them. It is fresh in the memory of great numbers of people how much money was got by supplying York's table &c. during the time York was abroad, who are mere baubles of creation.

The Duke of Athol is a chip of b(loo)d r(oya)l, obstinate to a degree of abhorrence. I was lately told that Lord Romney was an impartial man, but his speech May the 30th confirms me that he is ministerial. Lord Auckland falsifies his own knowledge—the Marquis of Lansdowne is quite right. At Christmas I heard a woman say in seven years neither party in all probability would be able to help themselves. This was in answer to me because I said I would give ministers seven years longer to bring the country to ruin. I need not read Lord Grenville's answer to the Marquis; I know without his declaration he meant to keep his place,—well, so I would have it. Lord Darnley may at present think that the least evil which most likely is the greatest. Other people's memory is

as good as Loughborough's—instance his mercy in the year '80.[1] Mr. Wm. Smith, M.P., justifies the conduct of the meeting of the Crown and Anchor Tavern. I, for one, heard at the last Mr. H. Tooke was suffered to speak but little, and I was glad to hear it, for fear his enemies should be too mighty for him, in case a spy of good repute like Upton had tickled the ear of Portland, Loughborough, Pitt or Dundas.

A word about songs.—Surely it is horrid in the extreme to lash a man to the guns for singing a song that a prig of an officer happens to think will lower the spirits of a ship's crew. This, I may venture to say, is the case if a man unthinkingly should begin a song of the ship being cast ashore. So much for discipline and order. How I detest it as described in Voltaire's Candid(e) (a book I have lately met with) or in the Gazetteer, if I mistake not, published upon Old George's Tyrany, or rather as it was called, the Laws of Russia.

June 12th.

Variety were the reports yesterday concerning the fleet. Parker. If Parker can make his escape, let him; though if he is destroyed "the dead may tell tales" remains undisputed, as Mr. Tooke surely proved it by a quotation from Mr. Gibbon last Westminster election. Admitting Buonaparte is lingering from poison, another general may verify an old proverb, viz. :— Out of the frying pan, into the fire. With pleasure I hear Mr. Cooper is going to Bristol; the Jew Rabbis, I hear, are offended with him in London.

Earl Spencer. June 14th.

SENTIMENTS FROM JULY 10TH.

MARMONTEL[2]

It would have been better if the Widow Parker had let her husband's body rest where it was first laid in the earth. I rejoice that she recovered it for her peace of mind, though to have saved herself the fatigue she underwent I wish she had demanded it from the executioners after his death. Could she

1. For the speeches in Parliament to which reference is made here, see Parl. Hist., vol. xxxiii, 644-776. The last allusion is to Loughborough's measures against the Gordon Riots.

2. The toast of the evening. Marmontel, the French publicist, was at this time in his old age (b. 1723, d. 1799).

lawfully have done that? It seems they had no power to have refused it her. However it is perhaps better as it was, as she now owes nothing to their good will. If they had thrown his body into the sea it would have spared her a great deal of anxiety of mind. Perhaps they might not think of that and they might have advised not to do it if they proposed it.

And do you really think Parker a ———?[1] It seems he is so spoke of in different companies, but I mix with but few.

You believe, I suppose, that the different retailers of his dying speech were insulted by the swinish multitude, out of affection to Parker?

If they called Parker a traitor they were rightly served.

(MacGinnes, a marine, sentenced to Botany Bay):

I rejoice to think that it was possible he might live to convey the ship home that Mr. Palmer leaves Botany Bay in before his wretched sentence if the times changed, &c.

Sailors' Parody:—

Britannia know thy force
And break the chains of despotic power.
So shall thy country ever greet thy doings,
And welcome thee with songs of triumph.

Evan Nepean, Esq., Secy. to the Admiralty.

[From A.S.I. 3974, Intelligence.]

SONGS COMPOSED DURING THE NORE MUTINY.

I. "THE MUSE'S FRIENDLY AID."

A copy of verses on the Seamen displaying their Noble Spirit in the year 1797.

The Muse's friendly aid I must invite,
Likewise a pen that's taught itself to write,
No wit I boast, but am by fancy led
To search the deep caverns of my hollow head,
If Attic rhyme Apollo there has stored,
I'll here deposit all her favourite hoard.

1. This word is illegible.

In days of yore when rich and poor agreed,
Poor served the rich and rich the poor relieved.
No despotic tyrants then the womb produced
But mutual all, each loved, and none abused,
But now how dreadful is the scene reversed,
We're blest with birth, but with oppression cursed.

The theme I treat on is our royal tars,
Whose godlike spirits rival even Mars,
From their supineness now their souls are roused
To rod and yoke no longer are exposed.
But all alike, each swears he will be true,
And tyrants ne'er their former course renew.

At Spithead first their noble blood was fired;
Each loved his King, but one and all aspired;
To serve each other was their full intent,
And if insulted were on mischief bent,
But still their country's cause they would maintain,
Against the rebels or the power of Spain.

Then at the Nore the lions boldly roused
Their brethren's cause at Spithead they espoused.
Each swore alike to King he would be true,
But one and all the tyrants would subdue,
Their gallant hearts the chains of bondage broke
No to revolt, but to evade the yoke.

In Yarmouth next old Neptune reared his head,
Awake my sons, the watery monarch paid—
The torpid vapours from your souls remove—
Inspire yourselves with true fraternal love.
Unto the Nore repair without delay,
There join your brothers with a loud Huzza.

The worthy god's advice the heroes took,
Each broke his chains and off the panic shook
Unto the Nore their gallant ships they steered,
Whilst brethren cheered them as each ship appeared.
Oh Britons free, usurp no tyrant sway,
Protect your tars, and then they'll you obey.

[Papers of the *Repulse*, No. 35, A.S.I. 727, C. 370a.]

II. "WHILST LANDSMEN WANDER."

Whilst Landsmen wander tho' control'd
And boast the rites of freemen,
Oh! view the tender's loathsome hole
Where droop your injured seamen.
Dragged by Oppression's savage grasp
From every dear connection,
Midst putrid air, oh! see them gasp,
Oh! mark their deep dejection.
Blush then, O! blush, ye pension host,
Who wallow in profusion,
For our foul cell proves all your boast
To be but mean delusion.

If Liberty be ours, O! say why are not all protected?
Why is the hand of ruffain sway
'Gainst seamen thus directed?
Is thus your proof of British rights?
Is this rewarding bravery?
Oh! shame to boast your tars' exploits,
Then doom these tars to slavery.
Blush then, &c.

When just returned from noxious skies,
Or Winter's raging ocean,
To land the sunburnt seaman flies
Impelled by strong emotion.
His much lov'd Kate, his children dear,
Around him cling delighted,
But lo, the impressing fiends appear
And every day is blighted.
Blush then, &c.

Thus from each soft endearment torn,
Behold the seaman languish,
His wife and children left folorn
The prey of bitter anguish.
Bereft of those arms whose vigorous strength,
Their shield, from want defended,
They droop, and all their woes at length
Are in a workhouse ended.
Blush then, &c.

Hark then, ye minions of a court
Who prate at Freedom's blessing,
Who every hell-born war support
And vindicate impressing,
A time will come when things like you,
Mere baubles of creation,
No more will make mankind pursue
The work of devastation.
Blush then, &c.

[Papers of the *Repulse,* No. 2.]

III. "ALL HAIL BROTHER SEAMEN."

All hail, brother seamen, that ploughs on the main,
Likewise to wellwishers of seamen of fame,
May providence watch over brave British tars,
And guide them with care from the dangers of wars.

Good Providence long looked with pity at last
For to see Honest Jack so shamefully thrashed,
But still held his arm for to let Jack subdue
The pride of those masters whose hearts were not true.

At Spithead Jack from a long silence was roused,
Which waked other brothers who did not refuse
To assist in the plan that good Providence taught
In the hearts of brave seamen, that 'add long been forgot.

Old Neptune made haste, to the Nore he did come,
To waken his sons who had slept far too long.
His thundering loud voice made us start with surprise,
To hear his sweet words, and he bid us arise.

" Your brothers," says he, " his all firmly resolved,
To banish all tyrants that long did uphold,
Their crewel intentions to scourge when they please,
Sutch a set of bace villians you must instantly seize."

" So away, tell your brothers, near Yarmouth they lie,
To embark in the cause they will never deny.
Their hearts are all good, their like lyons I say,
I've furnished there minds and they all will obey."

" And when they arrive, which I trust they soon will,
Be steady and cautious, let wrangling lay still,
And love one another, my favour you'll keep,
Suckcess to King George and his glorious fleet."

[Papers of the *Repulse*, No. 29. In the original document this song is headed Song No. 13, and " The Muse's Friendly Aid " is Song No. 6. The seamen must therefore have made a large collection of songs for the purpose of elevating their spirits and occupying their season of liberty. Henry Long's note to the Admiralty (see above, p. 123) is written on the back of the sheet which contains this poem.]

APPENDIX B.

NOTE ON PARKER'S ALLEGED INSANITY.

The question has often been raised to what extent Parker was responsible for his conduct during the mutiny. His wife, who made most persistent and pathetic attempts to rescue him from the power of the law, told the magistrates at Edinburgh that his mind was deranged, and that for that reason he had been discharged from the position of master's mate on the *Royal William*.[1] In one, not very reliable, account of Parker's life it is said that one of his sisters had been insane for a time.[2] And Brenton wrote in his description of Parker in the *Naval History:* "Having seen him on this occasion (the trial and execution), and from the knowledge I had of his former circumstances from my father, who was at this time regulating captain at Leith, and by whose order he was sent round to the Nore, I have no doubt that he was at times deranged. In his passage between Leith and Sheerness he attempted to destroy himself by jumping overboard."

But in spite of these statements there is still good reason for believing that Parker was in full possession of his faculties. There is no trace of insanity in any reliable evidence of his conduct during the mutiny or at the court-martial, and there were many ringleaders in the fleet whose behaviour was more violent than Parker's. His wife was not an unbiassed witness. She would naturally grasp at any excuse which might save her husband's life, and some of her statements were certainly inaccurate. Brenton's account is circumstantial, but it is not supported by direct evidence. His father, the Regulating Captain, and Lieutenant Watson, who commanded the tender in which Parker was brought to the Nore, both reported to the Admiralty what they knew of Parker's conduct and history, but neither of them said anything of an attempt to commit suicide—an extraordinary omission if any such incident did occur.

1. Thomas Elder, Lord Provost, to Nepean, 15 June, Pro. P 23, Digest.
2. Trial, Life and Anecdotes, p. 79.

Lieutenant Watson said that while the tender was at the Nore during the mutiny Parker spent a long time on board with his old messmates, and that at any mention of a return to duty "his brain took fire" and he spoke "incoherent nonsense." In order to lower Parker in the estimation of the crew, Watson gave him an excess of liquor "knowing his propensity that way."[1] There is nothing here to suggest more than an ordinary lack of self-control. And we may conclude that Parker's mind was to some extent excitable and ill-balanced, but not to the extent of insanity.

1. Captains' Letters B, A.S.I. 1517, 7 June.

APPENDIX C.

LIST OF AUTHORITIES.

DOCUMENTS IN THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE :

ADMIRALTY DIGEST FOR 1797, Index (Series III) 74.

The Digest contains a section of more than eighty pages on the Mutinies. It gives summaries of a great number of useful documents, and it is particularly valuable now because many of the original papers have disappeared.

ADMIRALTY SECRETARY IN-LETTERS :

LETTERS FROM ADMIRALS AND COMMANDING OFFICERS :

PORTSMOUTH, Sir Peter Parker, A.S.I., 1022, 1023.

CHANNEL FLEET, Lord Bridport, A.S.I. 107.

NORE, Buckner, A.S.I. 727, 728.

NORTH SEA FLEET, Duncan, A.S.I. 524.

PLYMOUTH, Orde and King, A.S.I. 811.

MEDITERRANEAN FLEET, Jervis, A.S.I. 396.

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, Pringle, A.S.I. 56.

JAMAICA, Sir Hyde Parker, A.S.I. 248.

ADMIRALS UNEMPLOYED, A.S.I. 529.

The Admirals' letters are the most important source of information on the Mutinies. The dispatches from Portsmouth and the Channel Fleet are particularly full and instructive; they give practically a consecutive account of the Spithead mutinies from beginning to end. Buckner's letters from the Nore are by no means so full, but they provide a solid framework to which details can be fitted from other sources. Duncan's letters are useful for the outbreak at Yarmouth before the fleet deserted him, although they give very little impression of Duncan's own services.

CAPTAINS' AND LIEUTENANTS' LETTERS :

Unfortunately I have only been able to examine a few bundles of these letters. The alphabetical arrangement of the bundles makes research in these letters a slow and tedious process, unless the research is biographical. But in all probability the captains' and lieutenants' letters will not provide much new information. References in the Digest do not raise the hope of

useful discovery. Moreover, there are many letters from captains and lieutenants among the Admirals' dispatches; and it is probable that in most matters relating to the Mutinies subordinate officers would communicate with the Admiralty through their Commanders-in-Chief.

Promiscuous Letters, including letters and papers of the seamen, are only preserved from the year 1801. There are references in the Digest and in the Rough Minutes of the Board to many Promiscuous Letters which would be of the highest interest. A few are enclosed with the Admirals' dispatches. The most useful and entertaining are the papers found on the *Repulse* and preserved among Buckner's letters (A.S.I. 727, C370a). If only similar treasures had been collected on the other ships at the Nore our knowledge of the Mutiny would be very much more vivid and intimate than it is.

Reports of Courts-martial, A.S.I. 5486. A mine of information, containing a detailed account of the trials of some dozens of the leading mutineers, beginning with the court-martial of Richard Parker. The reports are described above, p. 251, n. 2. The complete amnesty after the Spithead Mutiny, although it was both politic and just, has deprived us of a corresponding source of information in regard to the Channel Fleet.

Solicitors' Letters, A.S.I. 3685: give a great amount of evidence taken before magistrates in preparation for the courts-martial.

Letters from Secretary of State, A.S.I. 4172: provide several useful side-lights, including reports from Lord Howe to Portland, and the important letter from Cooke of Dublin Castle on the intentions of the United Irishmen.

Useful documents are also to be found in the following volumes or bundles of In-Letters:—

Intelligence, A.S.I. 3974.

Secret Letters, A.S.I. 1352.

Petitions, A.S.I. 5125 (including the papers of the *Queen Charlotte*).

Orders in Council, A.S.I. 5189.

Memorials and Reports, A.S.Misc. 343.

Admiralty Secretary Out-Letters:

The most important volumes are:

Secretary's Letters, A.S.O. 617.

Orders and Instructions, A.S.O. 133.

Secret Orders and Letters, A.S.O. 1352.

And the Rough Minutes of the Board, A.S.M. 136, 137 (quoted in Appendix A), are an authority second only in importance to

the Admirals' letters. The BOARD'S MINUTES, A.S.M. 118, are much more formal, and contain very few allusions to the Mutinies.

The BRIDPORT PAPERS, British Museum, Addl. MSS. 35,197, are a useful supplement to Bridport's official dispatches.

PRINTED BOOKS :—

NEALE, W. J., *History of the Mutiny at Spithead and the Nore* (1842). Neale is the author of "Paul Periwinkle" and other nautical novels. His account of the Mutinies has very little historical value : it resolves itself into an attack on Pitt and his colleagues, and it is very inaccurate in detail. Neale seems to have drawn his information from Schomberg or Brenton and newspapers of 1797, but he introduces mistakes which are not found elsewhere.

CUNNINGHAM, REAR-ADMIRAL CHARLES, *A Narrative of the Occurrences that took place during the Mutiny at the Nore* (1829). A reliable account (with the exception of one or two slight mistakes in chronology) written by an observant and fair-minded eye-witness. The book was written thirty-two years after the Mutiny, but it was evidently worked up from a diary made at the time of the rising. There is an excellent portrait of Cunningham as a frontispiece.

COLPOYS, REAR-ADMIRAL E. G. (formerly Captain E. GRIFFITHS, of the *London*), *Letter to Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Byam Martin* (1825). A pamphlet containing an account of the author's uncle, Sir John Colpoys, written to correct Brenton's description of the mutiny on the *London*.

SHORT ACCOUNTS OF THE MUTINIES :

ANNUAL REGISTER, vol. 39, chap. xii.

SCHOMBERG, *Naval Chronology* (1802), vol. iii, p. 8-38. A contemporary account, correct in the main outlines, but—in spite of the title—with some confusion in dates.

JAMES, *Naval History* (1822-4), vol. ii, pp. 22-27, 62-66. A very short description, with only one or two minor inaccuracies. James gives a very good sketch of the characteristic quota-man.

BRENTON, *Naval History of Great Britain* (1837), vol. i, chap. xv. Brenton follows Schomberg's account and adds a good deal of true and false information of his own. His pages on the Spithead Mutinies should be read in conjunction with Colpoys's *Letter to Sir T. B. Martin*. For the mutiny in the North Sea

fleet Brenton is more reliable, as he was on board the *Agamemnon* at the time of the outbreak. Even here, however, his facts are often wrong. The 1837 edition is more accurate than the first edition, of 1825.

Clowes, *The Royal Navy*, vol. iv, pp. 167-181. Uncritical in matters of detail, but useful for a general view of the disturbances in all the fleets during the war. In various parts of the book there are portraits of most of the officers chiefly concerned in dealing with the Mutinies.

Hannay, D., Articles in the *Saturday Review*, 6 June—4 July, 1891; *Short History of the British Navy*, vol. ii. In both works Mr. Hannay gives a very interesting and well-balanced account in a small compass.

The following are the chief works which have been used for reference:—

Annual Register, vol. 39, State Papers, pp. 238-256.

Barrow, *Life of Howe*.

Buckingham, Marquis of, *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III*, vol. ii.

Camperdown, Earl of, *Life of Duncan*.

Cobbett, William, *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxiii.

Colomb, Admiral, *Life of Key*.

Dictionary of National Biography.

Dropmore Papers (Historical Manuscripts Commission), vol. iii.

Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt*.

Fraser, E., *"Londons" of the Fleet*.

Hamilton, Admiral Sir R.V., *Letters of Sir Thomas Byam Martin* (Navy Records Society).

House of Commons Reports, vol. x. *Reports of Secret Committees on Seditious Societies*.

Masefield, John, *Sea Life in Nelson's Time*.

Mason, *Life of Howe* (1803).

Oppenheim, M., *History of the Administration of the British Navy*.

Parker, Richard, Biographical pamphlets:

An Impartial and Authentic Account (1797).

The Trial, Life and Anecdotes (1797).

The Whole Trial and Defence (1797?).

Patton, V.-Admiral Philip, *Natural Defence of an Insular Empire* (1810).

Robinson, Commander C. N., *The British Fleet.*
Rose, J. Holland, *William Pitt and the Great War.*
Stanhope, *Life of Pitt.*
Tone, Theobald Wolfe, *Memoirs,* vol. ii; *Life* (edited by his son), vol. ii.

NEWSPAPERS :—

Belfast News-Letter, London Evening Post, London Packet Moniteur, Morning Chronicle, Morning Post, Northern Star (Belfast), *Star, Times, True Briton.*

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[Abbreviations: Letters in brackets after the names of ships show the fleets to which the ships belonged at the time of the Mutinies.

Ch. represents the Channel Fleet.

N. represents the Nore Fleet.

N.S. represents the North Sea Fleet.

The figures in brackets show the number of guns carried. The guns mounted on several ships varied slightly in number from time to time; but the figures given below will serve to show the size and character of the ships. Line-of-battle ships had 64 or more guns (in the North Sea Fleet, 50 or more); frigates from 24 to 50; sloops and other small vessels less than 20.]

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SHEERNESS AND

Prittlewell
Southchurch
Wick
Bournes Green
Southchurch Hall
Southchurch Buttery
Thorpehall Fm
Shoebury Shop
Shoebury Hall
North Shoebury
Cherry Trees
Southmans
Black Grounds
Pig's Bay
Cambridge Town
C.G.S.
Inn
SHOEBURYNESS
Barracks
SHOEBURY NESS
Southend Flat
Lighthouse
The Knock
5 Fathoms
T H A M E S
5 Fathoms
Nore Light
10 Fathoms
5 Fathoms
Stone
Rose Bank
Marsh
White Hall Fm
The Flats
Grain Spit
Grain
C.G.S.
Garrison Point
SHEERNESS
Cheyneyrock
Oyster Ground
Wallend
Blue Town
Chimney Rock
Barton's Point
Marsh
Pier
Mile Town
Marine Town
Scrapgate
C.G.S.
Port Victoria
Ferry
Minster Marshes
West Minster
Inn
Sheerness Fort
S.E. & C.R.
Wards
Workho.
East End
Minster
Stangate Spit
Queenborough Spit
Pier
Halfway Houses
Pigtail Corner
C.G.S.
Cripps
Parsonage Fm
QUEENBOROUGH
Neats Court
Scocles Fm
Norwood
Eastchurch
Chetney Marshes
West Pt
Rushenden
Wallend
Inn
Colds Ho.
Chetney
I S L E O F S H E P P E Y
Poors
Oldhook
Standford Hill
Eastchurch Sta.
Minster Marshes
Stray Marshes
Kingsferry Br.
Queen's Br.
The Dray
Stonepit
Barksore Marshes
Raspberry Hill
Ridham Marshes
Elmley Island
Hook Quay
Eastchurch Marshes
Great Bells
Iwade
Inn
Elmley
Cement Works
Elmley Marshes
Wellmarsh
Spitend
Barksore
Mout Fm
Cutnalls
THE SWALE
Grovehurst
Kemsley
Elmley Ferry
Spitend
Ordnance Survey, Southampton 1913.
4
6
8 Miles

THE NORE.

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